



# WHEN BOSE WAS ZIAUDDIN

*by*  
UTTAM CHAND

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The publishers are paying me a royalty of 30% of the printed price of this book. Out of this I have decided to donate 2½% on first edition to the I. N. A. Relief Fund and 10% to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan to be spent at his discretion in the Province to which I belong, *viz*, the N W F P. On subsequent editions I shall donate 2½% to the I. N. A. Relief Fund and 5% to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

—UTTAM CHAND

TO

MY WIFE, RAMO DEVI,  
*without whose help and cooperation*  
*this humble service to Bose Babu &*  
*Mother India would have been*  
*impossible*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

It was *via* Kabul that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose escaped to Berlin. I had the privilege of being his host in Kabul.

This book is not a homage to Subhas Chandra Bose but is only a narrative of a heroic escape from India to Berlin via Kabul. It is a collection of my reminiscences relating to Bose Babu's visit to Kabul. So far as I can depend on my memory I have tried to recapture the actual words used by Bose Babu in his conversations. I have tried to mention dates to the best of my memory. But here is and can be the possibility of errors. Since the events related in the book belong to a period of four years ago, a number of errors of various types might have crept in. I must crave the readers' indulgence for such errors.

These reminiscences were first recorded in Urdu, when I was transferred to the Rawalpindi jail in 1945. So, only did I feel in the solitary cell that I decided to utilize my time in recapturing the story of Subhas Bose's escape to Berlin. This not only kept me busy but also enabled me to keep an authentic record of the sequence of events that led Bose Babu from India to the Axis Headquarters.

What prompted me to write these notes was the eagerness of my fellow prisoners in the various jails that I visited, to know how Bose Babu escaped. During my internment period of three years I had the rare opportunity of meeting many political prisoners. At first their attitude was dubious. Their behaviour betrayed that they suspected me as a dangerous internee. Judged by the average criterion, they were not wrong. To every political prisoner,

a central government detenu is a dangerous person. But my case was still peculiar. I was not only a central government prisoner who was transferred to the Punjab, but I had already undergone a course of training in prison life in the Lahore Fort. However their suspicions created many conjectures as the causes of my arrest and internment. But when they knew the nature of circumstances that led to my arrest in Kabul, their suspicions changed to compassion. So warm and indulgent were they to me that I fail to express my gratitude in adequate phraseology. They repeatedly wished me to relate all the events of Subhas Babu's escape. But it was too tedious to narrate to every person. If however a man persisted in his requests then I had to bribe him with the narration to preserve my piece of mind. Personally I always hesitated to retell that story. The time was not opportune. I was forewarned that a number of 'suspects' would be surrounding me in jails and that a frank *tete a tete* would be hazardous and fraught with dangerous consequences. I preferred to wait for a time when I would be able to present the story in a book form to the public.

Whosoever knew that Bose Babu escaped to Berlin via Kabul was amazed. To them it was a miracle, a heroic deed to cross the guarded frontiers of India, to escape the vigilance of the Indian Police to evade the far extended iron hands of the British government. How did it all happen? What hardships and privations were borne in the tribal areas? What tedious routes were traversed? Under what circumstances? without a passport! And then how did the President reach Berlin? Wonder of wonders! Yes, it was so—A thrilling chapter in the history of a heroic leader, the man who sacrificed his all for the consuming passion for Independence of his country.

The sceptical reader would ask, how do I know what I recall and what makes me call that these records are authentic? To this my only reply would be that one depends on the integrity of the narrator. A few snatches from my own political life will give these records the authenticity that they might need.

I am a resident of Peshawar and was born in a respectable family. From my childhood I used to wonder at and dislike the unequal distribution of wealth. I saw how on one hand the poor failed to earn enough to support themselves and their family even after toiling the whole day long while, on the other, the rich had all the luxuries of life at their back and call. It is generally taken for granted that fate plays its part in the distribution of wealth and that we get only that much and not a grain more than what has been allotted to us by Him. I could not reconcile myself to the thought that the Almighty could be so unjust.

It was sometime in 1928 or 1929 that the Congress started a branch at Peshawar. I participated in the opening ceremony. When I read the Congress manifesto I gathered that slavery was the root-cause of our poverty and that India should become free. This left a deep impression on me and I became a four-anna member of the Congress.

After sometime another institution named the Naujavan Bharat Sabha came into being at Peshawar. In the manifesto issued by the Sabha it was explained that unequal distribution of wealth was incidental to our social order and that all matters could be set right by changing it. I met the Secretary of the Sabha and was glad to learn from him that I could join the Sabha and retain my membership of the Congress at the same time. Subsequently I got my-

self enrolled as a member of the Sabha which was being run on socialistic principles

At that time I was about 18 years and yearned to serve my country.

In 1930, when Mahatma Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement, many prominent leaders of the Province were put under arrest, the General Secretary of the Sabha being one of them. I was then called upon by the Sabha to take up the charge left by him. The arrest of the leaders caused much unrest among the people. After some time two or three more Congress leaders were arrested. When the police took them to the police station people formed a procession and followed them. The police opened fire on the crowd, resulting in the death of many patriots. Even now each year celebrations are held at that place in the sacred memory of the martyrs.

Several arrests were made after this incident and I was among those gaoled. Both the Congress and the Naujavan Bharat Sabha were declared unlawful bodies and prosecutions were launched against us after two months. I was sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment.

Our business continued till the year 1942. Bose Babu came there in January 1941 and how he passed forty-three days in suspense there before going to Berlin is the subject matter of this book.

About a year after Bose Babu had left, I one day sat reading a newspaper at Kabul. Bose Babu's companion referred to in the following pages was also with me at that time. From a small news item I learned that a man had been arrested by the Indian Government. We could not then guess the reason for the arrest, but I could see that my own position was not safe.

On May 25, 1942, I was served with a notice by the

Afghan Government asking me to quit Afghanistan within 48 hours I made representation saying that I had been conducting business at Kabul for the last ten years and paid thousands of rupees each year in customs I also pointed out that it was neither possible for me to sell off my belongings nor realise my dues in such a short time But my request fell on deaf ears and after 48 hours I was taken into custody and sent in fetters in a lorry to Jalalabad at midnight on May 27 When I reached Jalalabad the next morning I was locked in a dark and narrow cell I remained there for two days during which I was not given anything to eat The room was so dark that I could not distinguish between day and night When I was brought out of that room I felt as if I was rising from my tomb From there I was taken from one jail to another till I was released

After my release the Hindustan Times correspondent in Peshawar encouraged me to release these notes for publication and that is how they found their way in the columns of the Hindustan Times, New Delhi My original intention was to confine the publication to the Hindustan Times, and Hindustan, New Delhi, the Leader and Bharat, Allahabad and the Searchlight, Patna Later on owing to the rush of applications from different papers for permission to reproduce the series, I accepted the recommendation of the Editor of the Hindustan Times to give permission to all the newspapers to reproduce the series on fixed payment, half of which would go to me and the other half to the I.N.A Relief fund

In conclusion, I must express my gratitude to the Managing Editor of the Hindustan Times, Mr Devdas Gandhi for the guidance given to me by him in regard to the publication of the series of articles in the press and later in book-form. I am also indebted to several members

of the staff of the Times and Hindustan for the painstaking manner in which they helped me with the preparation and finalizing of the manuscript. JAI HIND.

—Uttam Chand.

# I

It was a cold winter morning in Kabul in the month of February, 1941. Snow fell softly from the skies in balls of cotton. It covered the hills, the roofs of the houses and the roads so that wherever you turned, a dazzling whiteness met your eyes. The bitter cold had driven men indoors, the traffic had slowed down and the bazaar was unusually quiet.

I sat in my shop watching the falling flakes of snow, when a peon from the Hindustan Trade Agency brought a bundle of Indian papers. The sight of newspapers always thrilled me. I had always been a newspaper-addict. Subhas Bose's mysterious disappearance had only whetted my appetite for news from home. Only that morning a news broadcast from Delhi had announced that Bose Babu had been captured in Hardwar in the guise of a Sadhu, but mid-day's broadcast had contradicted the story saying that the Sadhu had turned out to be someone other than Bose Babu.

As I ran my eyes over the papers, I paused to read a statement by Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar to a representative of some paper saying that when he met Bose Babu a few days

before his disappearance, he was thinking of renouncing the world "I think he has become a Sadhu and gone to some place in South India," Sardul Singh had declared. My own theory was that Bose Babu had made some arrangement with the Japanese and escaped to Japan.

### A VISITOR

As I sat turning over the papers, a stranger entered my shop, greeted me with *Assalam Ulaikum* and addressed me in Pushto. He was dressed in a khaki Peshawar salwar, a khaki shirt, a leather jerkin and on top of it a leather waistcoat buttoned at the chest. Over his head was a turban tied in Pathan style, and on his feet were warm socks and Peshawar chappals. It was the dress of the border tribes.

"What can I do for you?" I asked the stranger.  
"Is your name Uttam Chand?" the stranger asked back sheepishly.

I was startled "Yes, my name is Uttam Chand," I said. The stranger faintly smiled at my answer. Again I asked him what I could do for him. The stranger didn't answer my question and looked around to see whether there was anybody listening to our conversation. There was a fifteen-years-old boy working in my shop. His name was Amarnath. I asked him to get a chair for the visitor. He took his seat but did not say a word.

A few minutes of oppressive suspense. I said to the

stranger, "Say whatever you have to without any hesitation. Why are you silent? Surely, you haven't come here without any purpose."

Again his eyes began to wander about the shop and finally rested on Amarnath. I at once knew it was Amarnath who stood in his way. So I sent him away to bring some tea.

The stranger at once brightened up and said "I am an Indian, come here on a political mission. But I have got into some trouble and have come to ask for your help."

"But who are you?" I asked, "How do you know my name? What is your mission and what's the trouble you are in?"

"I belong to Ghalla Dher, a village in Mardan District," said the stranger. "My name is Bhagat Ram. Do you recall a young man who made an attempt to shoot the Punjab Governor? He was my brother."

When he told me his name and village, I stood up and embraced him. My uncle had married in that village, and it later transpired that my aunt was a daughter of a neighbour of Bhagat Ram. Now I understood how he came to know my name. He must have heard of my arrest in 1930 as General Secretary of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, since he was also an important member of the sabha in his district. Everybody in Ghalla Dher knew that my uncle had a shop in Kabul and that I worked in that shop. Bhagat Ram knew my uncle and said he had seen him in the village while leaving for Kabul.

## THE MISSION

"Now tell me what is your political mission" I said, "and how I can help you".

"My mission is this. I have brought Subhas Chandra Bose here to smuggle him across the border to Russia and now" He paused for words

The revelation left me speechless. "Subhas Bose, and here!" I exclaimed. I could feel the heart jumping in my breast. Just then a customer came in and asked for something. Without thinking for a moment, I told him "I haven't got it." At last I collected myself and said to the stranger, "So what?"

"We are for the present staying at a *serai* but a Kabuli is after us," said Bhagat Ram. "I suspect he belongs to the Afghan C.I.D. He has made our lives miserable. That is why Bose Babu has sent me to request you to help us in this extremity"

Amarnath came back with the tea and we changed from Pushto to Urdu, which he could not follow

"You were saying that Bose has sent you to me, but he doesn't even know me," I said "How did you two know that I was here?"

"I knew you by name, since the days you were working in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha," he replied "I was also those days a member of the Mardan Sabha. I happened to go to the office of the Peshawar Sabha and saw you there twice or thrice. I knew that you had got two years' hard labour during the

movement of 1930. I learnt of your being here from your uncle. Everyone in the village knows that he has a shop in Kabul and that his nephew runs it. I have seen both of you brothers several times. But there is such close resemblance between you two that often I have mistaken your brother for you. That is why, to satisfy myself that it was you, I asked your name.

### IN A TIGHT CORNER

"How did I figure in your conversation?" I asked.

"It wasn't in connection with anything particular," he said, "but as soon as we came here we found ourselves in such a tight corner, that we had to think of every possible contingency. There you came in. I told Bose Babu I know a man who runs a shop here, has been to jail in 1930, and feels strongly for his country. He asked me that very day to contact you. To day at last misfortune has brought me to you. For five days now that C I D. fellow has been harassing us. The very first day Bose Babu had got terribly suspicious of the fellow and wanted me to contact you immediately."

"Now that you have been here for so many days, do you mind telling me if you have had any luck in your mission?" I asked.

### RUSSIAN ENVOY DISAPPOINTS

"I don't mind telling you at all," said Bhagat Ram. "It

must be the 3rd of February today. It is thirteen days since we have been here. We have taken a small room in a *serai* near Lahori Darwaza. This frightfully filthy place is the rendezvous for all the camel and mule drivers whose business brings them into the city. During all these days, we have tried our best to get in touch with the Russian Ambassador, but since no stranger is allowed to enter the Russian Legation, we have had no success. One day I saw a car flying the Russian flag passing. I had heard that only ambassadors' cars are allowed to fly their national flags. So I said to myself. 'It must be the Russian Ambassador's'. The car stopped. Besides the chauffeur in front there was another man in the back seat of the car. In my broken halting Persian, I told him about Bose Babu. I know a little Persian. I could understand what he said, 'How do I know that it is Subhas Chandra Bose?' The question dashed all our hopes to the ground. We could not satisfy the Ambassador about Bose Babu's identity. We remained silent and he drove on."

I suggested that the failure to interest the Russian Ambassador in the mission must be due to the visitors' defective knowledge of Persian and lack of any introductions to facilitate contact with the Russian Legation.

"It may be that," said Bhagat Ram

I wondered how far it was wise for those who were responsible for sending Bose Babu to Kabul to have sent him along with a person who did not know the A B C of this business.

They should have sent someone along with him who had an adequate command of both Persian and Russian. If that was not possible they should have at least got someone with him who had contacts with the Russian Legation

### ITALIAN EMBASSY

"When we lost hope in the Russian Ambassador," Bhagat Ram continued, "we tried to contact the Italian Ambassador. And in his case we succeeded. How we set about this job is a long story. You can hear it later. However, there was not much difficulty about it. The Italian Ambassador set our anxieties at rest and said, 'As soon as we can manage it, we shall send Bose to Berlin or Rome'."

"Now tell me," I said, "what help do you want from me?"

"First, you must arrange a safe place for us to stay," he said. "Second, if you have any contacts with the Russian Legation, do arrange for Bose Babu to be sent to Moscow, for though we have established contacts with the Axis, Bose Babu is not happy about going to Berlin or Rome."

"As far as asylum here is concerned you are welcome to my house," I said. "But I don't consider my house safe, because there is another person sharing it with me. His family occupies the ground floor while we live on the upper floor." My neighbour hailed from Peshawar and did business in cloth in Kabul. Besides, my house was situated in Hindu Guzar, the Hindu quarter which was the filthiest locality in that filthy city.

That was also, I told him, one of the reasons for my reluctance to put up Subhas Babu.

Bhagat Ram laughed "Who bothers about dirt and filth in a situation like ours?" he said. "The only point to consider is about your neighbour"

I thought of an alternative A Muslim friend of mine had a very nice house near mine He also belonged to my own province. In his youth he was employed in the army, but had quarrelled with his English officers and left the job at the age of 19. Since then he had spent a large part of his life in China, Japan, America and Germany, and had married a German woman. He was now nearing 70 and was bitterly anti-British. We used to call him Haji Sahib as he had done the pilgrimage to Mecca. He had set up a hosiery machine in his house and that was his sole means of livelihood. Since Bose Babu's disappearance from India, he had often talked about him and used to say, "Bose is the lion of India."

I asked Bhagat Ram if I could inquire from this friend whether he would put up Bose Babu in his house.

Bhagat Ram said I could, provided I was sure that he wouldn't betray them. "But if he refuses, what then?" he asked.

I was sure he would not refuse, but even if he did there was always my house where Bose Babu could come and stay.

"Don't worry about that," Bhagat Ram said "If Bose Babu can stay in that slummy *sewa* he can stay any-

where Now I am afraid I am getting late I must go back and look after Bose Babu Tell me finally what you want to do I have a hunch that it is not safe to stay in that *serai* tonight "

I said since there was no time for me to think of a third alternative, they could come along to my house at 4 p m. In the meantime I would find out from the Haji If he agreed to my request, I would take him to his house, otherwise my house was there

### ZIAUDDIN

When the stranger rose to go, I asked him if he had also adopted a name to suit his Pathan guise.

He said, "Of course, how could I do without a name ? My name is Rahmat Khan, and Bose Babu's name is Ziauddin. Well then, I am coming at 4 o'clock with Bose Babu "

And now I felt a sudden weakness creeping over me

"The British," I reflected, "must be hot on Bose Babu's trail and a furious search must be going on for him, particularly in countries bordering India What if the Haji refuses to put him up and I have to lodge him ? What will be the consequences if he is discovered in my house ? And if my wife is arrested along with me too, what will happen to my children in this barbarous country ? Indians living in Afghanistan are so completely terrorised that they will be even afraid to take my children under their protection " But this phase of weakness soon passed.

## HAJI HESITATES

I left the shop and went to the Haji's house. He was not in. But on my way back I met him. After looking around to see that no one was within earshot, I broached to him the purpose of my visit. I told him that some men had come from India on a political mission and wanted his shelter.

The Haji laughed and said "You are too unsophisticated. You don't understand these things. I have known many such cases. In Europe I helped several Indians and instead of getting anything out of it, I only suffered. Now, even if God comes to seek shelter in my house I won't give it, because I know Indians aren't trustworthy. Besides, I am old now and don't want to get involved in any political trouble."

The Haji's answer hurt me. This man, I said to myself, used to talk so much about freedom but at the very first test fails miserably.

I chided him for doubting the *bona fides* of my friends.

"Don't get annoyed," he said, trying to pacify me. "I have grown old in doing such jobs. Several others have been let down like this. But it may be that the person who has come to you is the right person. All right, tell me his name."

"What is the use of your asking his name since you are not prepared to help," I said.

"No," he said, "if he is really a big leader of India and trustworthy I may shelter him."

"Guess the name then," I said.

"Well, you can't produce Bose here, can you?" he replied.

"All right then, it is Bose" I answered triumphantly

The Haji was stunned, "Bose! Bose!", he shouted incredulously

"Now what do you say?" I asked

"I am quite ready to keep him You have seen my house Tell me the room in which I should put him"

I suggested the room next to the machine room

The Haji hesitated "You must remember that my house is also a factory," he said, "and not only some eight labourers come to work there every day, there are the customers too, who walk right in because my German wife doesn't observe *purdah* Now tell me, in view of these difficulties how can I keep him? I think there is no safer place than your house"

I told the Haji about the filth and congestion in my house and about the neighbour, but added "Never mind Since you have refused I can't do anything else but take him to my house." I bade him farewell and returned to my shop

## 2

It was ten minuntes to four when Rahmat Khan arrived. He was alone, so I inquired where Bose Babu was. He said he was on the opposite bank of the river. (The Kabul river flowed in front of my shop). He pointed out to me someone on the opposite bank of the river, but I could not spot Bose Babu.

"Where is he?" I asked him again, straining my eyes."

"There he is, don't you see?" he said pointing out in the direction of a person who looked like a Pathan. "But you won't recognize him," he added. "His dress and appearance are entirely changed."

I sent Amarnath home with a message that there would be two guests with me at dinner, closed the shop and set off with Rahmat Khan. About a furlong from my shop, there was a bridge where it had been planned that Bose Babu would meet us. We reached the bridge a few moments earlier and not finding him there walked in the direction from which he was to come. The offices in Kabul had closed about that time and there was great rush on the bridge. We had gone only a few steps when Rahmat Khan said, "Come along, he has come."

Bose looked every inch a Pathan. He was dressed in an unwashed *salwar* and an equally dirty shirt. Walking over roads with two feet deep snow, his socks had become soggy and cold. A three-inch long beard covered his face and the familiar spectacles were absent. On his shoulders was a dirty sheet. One end of his turban was hanging in front of him and another behind.

I was wondering whether it was really Bose when Rahmat Khan shook me up by the shoulder and said, "Come along, what are you doing here, standing and thinking?" After we had walked few steps, I said to Rahmat Khan, "Your walking along with me looks rather suspicious. Why not be a few steps behind me and let Bose Babu follow a few steps behind you?"

My house was about a mile from the bridge. It was a tricky road, with many pits now covered by snow. Several times Bose Babu stumbled.

#### WADING THROUGH SNOW

We negotiated the part of the route through the bazaar safely. Only the narrow lane of my locality remained. People had swept all the snow from their houses and dumped it into the lane which made walking rather difficult. Since there was no one else in the lane except us three, I came nearer Bose Babu to guide his steps as there were many bad pits in the lane. Once Bose Babu's foot went inside one of them, and I could just hold him back from falling down. Just then, a neighbour

of mine passed by. Seeing Bose, he remarked "One does not know where this 'poor traveller has come from;" and then turning to Bose Babu asked, "Bhaiji to which *dharamshala* do you want to go?"

"Let us go our way," I interrupted "Wherever he wants to go he will go himself Why should we bother in this cold? Who knows who he is?" So saying I walked away with my Kabuli neighbour. Near the next turning, I stayed behind on the pretext of tying my shoestrings and let the Kabuli go ahead. Rahmat Khan and Bose Babu overtook me. At last we reached our house. No one, saw us entering it. All the neighbours had bolted their doors on account of the bitter cold and were sitting near their fireplaces.

Since it was snowing heavily, I arranged for a charcoal stove to keep him warm and then asked for some tea. I asked him if he would care for a bath. He laughed and said "Not now. But tomorrow I will need some hot water for a bath. Since I have set foot on Afghan soil, I haven't had a bath."

Bose Babu took off his wet socks. His feet were numb with cold. His *salwar* had also got drenched. I got him a shirt and a *salwar* and he changed his clothes. For the first time in Kabul Bose Babu put on his spectacles. Now I could recognize him.

Before I poured out tea, I apologized to him for any discomfort he may feel in my poor house

"How, childish of you, to talk like this," said Bose Babu,

"I can never forget what you have done for me in my present extremity I feel as if I were in my own house"

When we had finished tea, I asked Rahmat Khan how much luggage there was in the *sewa* "It is not much," he said "But still we cannot bring it without a coolie It is risky too If I came here with the coolie following me with the luggage, that C I D swine might chase me again"

"I will see to that," I said "You take Amarnath with you Take care, that the C.I.D fellow does not see Amarnath Actually, it would be better if you went into the inn first and let Amarnath follow you with the coolie You stand in front of your room, so that Amarnath can see you and come there You can give the luggage to Amarnath who will bring it, while you can follow after you have paid the innkeeper's bill"

"That's right," said Bose Babu "But take care that nobody follows you If you suspect anyone is on your track, keep wandering about till you give him the slip"

I called Amarnath, explained to him everything, and sent him along with Rahmat Khan

### SUSPICIOUS HOSTESS

After he had gone, I went to my wife to find out about the dinner

"Who are these guests ?" she asked suspiciously I told her they came from Laghman. It was a village in Jalalabad district and my wife knew that several of our relations and custo-

mers lived there ,

"But I know everybody from Laghman. I have never seen them in Peshawar," she replied.

"How could you see them in Peshawar ? They had been there only once. I had asked them to dinner then, but for some reason they could not come and have a meal with us."

"But how have they come now ? Who are they after all ?" She repeated her questions. "You are not telling me the truth," she added

"So you think I have been lying so far ?"

"If it is not lying what is it ? You want me to take a Muslim for a Hindu "

"You are mad "

"All right, do whatever you like I had become suspicious about the whole affair from the very beginning when I found out all about the new comer from Amarnath "

I knew it was Amarnath who had made her so suspicious

"What did Amarnath tell you ?" I asked

"I know everything," she said "How the beardless man came to you and greeted you like a Muslim. You talked to him in Pushto, and sent for Muslim tea for him ' Then he began talking in Hindustani and so on ' Do you dare deny all that ?"

I had thought Bose Babu was going to be there only for a few days and it would be better to keep his identity a secret But there was no escape from taking her into confidence.

"All right," I said. "I will tell you later who he is." So

saying I came back to Subhas Babu.

### 13 DAYS IN SERAI

Subhas Babu and I were alone at the moment.

I asked him how that Afghan C. I. D man came to suspect and harass them.

"It is February 3, today," began Bose Babu. "It is now 13 days since we came here, for I left Peshawar on January 19 and the journey took three days. It was very cold and snowing when we arrived here. I was, of course, an utter stranger to this place, but Rahmat Khan was no better. You know the place where the lorry drivers ask the passengers to get down in order to dodge the police. There is perhaps a toll outpost there too, because someone inspected the luggage in our lorry and signed on a paper."

"Perhaps you mean Lahori Darwaza, facing a big plain," I said.

"Yes that is it Lahori Darwaza. At the moment because of the snow there was not even a palanquin there. Even if there were what use would it have been to us? We did not even know where to go. At last we saw some men at a distance. We started in that direction. The mud and the snow on the way added to our hardships. We reached a bazaar where Rahmat Khan asked a person if there was any place to stay nearabout. He pointed towards a *serai*. "You go into that *serai*. There are many small rooms which are let out to travellers. You will

be able to get one of them," he said.

"We went into the *serai*. In the courtyard stood camels and horses tied to their stakes. A few cabs were parked in the verandah. I thought the place was not meant for human habitation, and our guide had played a practical joke on us.

"We went inside and began looking round. There did not seem to be any vacant room. We saw a man entering the *serai*. Rahmat Khan inquired from him about the innkeeper. He was rude and did not reply. Later we learnt that he did not know Pushto. We used to think that Pushto is the mother tongue of the Afghans, but on coming here I find it is Persian which is the mother tongue and not Pushto. Very few people know Pushto. That has added to our difficulties. Rahmat Khan knows only Pushto."

### THE INNKEEPER

"A few minutes later we saw a man come out of a room on the upper story. Rahmat Khan asked him about the innkeeper. He pointed out to us a very small room which was situated near the main gate of the *serai* and said 'That is where the watchman of the *serai* lives. Go to him.' When we went to that room, we saw a man lying wrapped up in his quilt. He had Mongolian features like a Gurkha or a Chinese."

I knew what Bose Babu meant. He must be from the tribe of Hazaras, belonging to a region in Afghanistan where it snows all the twelve months in the year. They are among the

poorest inhabitants of Afghanistan and have Mongolian features.

"The chaukidar," Bose Babu continued, "asked us in Pushto what we wanted. Rahmat Khan told him that we were travellers and wanted to be put up in the *seai* for the night. 'If you have any place, give it to us, and we shall pay your charges.'

"Thank God, he knew a little Pushto, otherwise, we would not have known where to look for an interpreter. The watchman led us upstairs, pointed towards a hovel and said the rent would be one Afghan rupee. Even cells for condemned prisoners in jails are better than that hovel. If you close the doors, you cannot know whether it is night or day.

"But in our plight then even that hovel was most welcome. Our legs had begun to fall us. It was very cold and would have been impossible to sleep on the floor. So I asked Rahmat Khan to find out from the watchman if we could get two beds. The chaukidar was mighty pleased, for the rent for a bed was half an Afghan rupee a day. We got the two beds. Later Rahmat Khan got some logs of wood. They were wet and it was difficult to make a fire out of them. They only produced smoke.

"A cold wind raged outside and we could not let the doors remain open. Smoke filled the cell and it became suffocating. We then managed to get a few dry logs for a fire to warm our frozen bodies.

In the evening Rahmat Khan brought some candles from the bazaar for a light, and some dry bread, and *kabaabs*.

When I could not eat that bread, he brought me a cup of tea I dipped the bread into it and ate it. That night we had good sleep But when the morning came and we got up, all the joints of our bodies were stiff and aching

“After breakfast Rahmat Khan bought two leather waist-coats, a kettle and two small carpets from the bazaar ”

## 3

"Six days back," continued Bose Babu, "Rahmat Khan came and said 'There is a man in white clothes, whom I find always sitting at the baker's shop. Today he stared hard at me. I fear he is one of the Afghan C I D.'"

"We had just finished our food when that constable came and stood at the door of our cell. 'Who are you?' he demanded in Pushto in an authoritative tone. 'What has brought you here?'"

"Rahmat Khan told him 'We are travellers from the border tribes. This (pointing to me) is my elder brother. He is both deaf and dumb. The poor fellow is ill. So I have brought him for a pilgrimage to Sukhi Sahib. Since the road to Sukhi Sahib has been closed due to a heavy snowfall, we have stopped here. When the road reopens, we shall resume our journey to Sukhi Sahib.' 'I don't believe all that,' the man said. 'You better come along with me to the Kotwali.' That was a bad turn. Rahmat Khan entreated 'Why do you harass poor travellers? My brother cannot even walk because of the bitter cold.' The fellow did not respond. Rahmat Khan then put on a brave

face. 'Come along then, I shall go to the Kotwali with you,' he said and then, pointing towards me, added, 'he is sick and can't go'

### GREEDY CONSTABLE

"This softened the constable a little, and he said "All right If he weren't ill, I would certainly have taken you both to the police station But now that he is ill, and you are travellers, I take pity on you Try to get away from here as soon as possible.' 'We are prepared to leave this very day provided the road is clear,' said Rahmat Khan 'All right, Khan,' said the constable, go and take rest It is very cold Only give me some money for tea.' Rahmat Khan gave him a two rupee (Afghan) note, and the fellow slunk away

"On the third day, he presented himself again I was alone in the cell He said something in Pushto. I made deaf and dumb signs He kept quiet and waited. Rahmat Khan returned in a few minutes. The C. I. D. man was very cordial this time 'Well, Khan,' he asked Rahmat Khan, 'could you not get a bus for Sukhi Sahib ?' 'If we could, would we have been sitting here ?' Rahmat Khan replied 'Even now, I am returning from the bus stand' Before the swine left, we had to part with another five Afghan rupees for his tea

"After he had gone, I told Rahmat Khan we must get rid of this man as soon as possible He is a greedy man How long shall we go on paying him ? 'What can we do ?' Rahmat Khan replied "The only way we can save ourselves from him

is to move to another *serai* '

"But what shall we do," I said, 'if another C.I.D. brother of his dogs our steps even there?' Rahmat Khan had no answer to this. It was then that I sent him to contact you. 'Rahmat Khan had already told me about you and I thought you might be of help. It took us two days to spot out your shop. Even then Rahmat Khan was reluctant to meet you. 'What will he think of me,' was his argument, 'for setting out on a political mission without making any previous arrangements?' I was angry. 'Do you want us to get arrested?' I said. 'You should have at least found out whether Uttam Chand is in town at all.'

### C I D MAN AGAIN

"The next day we were at our breakfast when the C I D. man inflicted himself on us again. He walked right in this time and planted himself on the bed. 'What is delaying your departure for Sukhi Sahib?' he demanded. 'The place is not too near that we can walk up to it,' said Rahmat Khan. 'There is no way of getting a bus. What can we do?' 'How is it you alone don't get a bus?' the fellow shouted. 'Last evening when I left you, I went to the lorry stand near Serai Abdurrahman. There I was told that a bus had left for Sukhi Sahib even yesterday. Besides, the mail-car goes there regularly twice a week.' 'Even yesterday I went to Serai Abdurrahman to find out about it' Rahmat Khan protested. 'No one told me about the bus. As for the mail-van, I am not so well-informed as to know about

it Today I will try again. If I get the mail or any other bus, we shall leave at once.'

" 'Khan,' the C. I. D constable retorted, 'I am beginning to suspect you two. I have been seeing you here for the last six days. You seem to me to belong to the Mohmand tribe (a rebel tribe in Afghanistan). Today I talked to my sub-inspector about you. He has ordered me to take you two to him. So you better take your tea quickly and come along with me.'

" This, we could see, was only another way of squeezing money out of us. So far he had taken money for tea. Now he wanted it in the name of the sub-inspector in order to fleece us further. Rahmat Khan said 'We are travellers and devout Mussalmans. If you are bent on harassing us, I shall take tea and come along with you. But my brother just can't come.' 'That can't be,' replied the brute in a stern voice. 'I shall take you both. He may be deaf and dumb but that can't prevent him from walking a little.' Finding that matters had gone rather far, Rahmat Khan took out a five-rupee note and said 'Now that I am coming with you, why trouble this poor fellow?'

" The constable pocketed the note but said. 'I am not to be bought off by five rupees. I can't afford to disobey the orders of the sub-inspector. No, that can't be.' Rahmat Khan now took out another five-rupee note. But the blackguard protested that even that was too little. At last the deal was settled for 17 rupees (A constable's pay in Afghanistan is 30 Afghan rupees, which comes to six Indian rupees). 'All right I won't bother you

today' he said at last, 'but you must get away from here tomorrow definitely If I find you here tomorrow, I will positively take both of you to my sub-inspector' Rahmat Khan thanked him for taking pity on poor travellers and said that he was going to find out about the bus, and if there was any going, we would be definitely leaving But the man remained unsatiated

### A PRECIOUS WATCH

"My wrist-watch was on Rahmat Khan's wrist. He had noticed it. He said 'This watch looks expensive What must be its price?' Rahmat Khan said the watch was not so very expensive 'Why don't you give it to me then,' he said, 'you have not given me enough money' There was no choice. Rahmat Khan had to part with the watch.

"After the constable had gone, I insisted on Rahmat Khan going to you Twice he went and came back with the news that the shop was closed The whole of yesterday we were on tenterhooks This morning, Rahmat Khan was again leaving for your shop when the dreaded constable reappeared 'Khan,' he said, 'the watch you gave me has been confiscated by the sub-inspector He asked me where I had got it from I told him it belonged to my brother He became suspicious but I stuck to my story He again inquired about you two I told him that you had left the *serai* Khan, that watch was very nice indeed How much did it cost?' 'I don't remember its price,' said Rahmat Khan, 'but it was a good watch Why did

you give it to the sub-inspector ?' The constable began cursing the sub-inspector and said, 'Right now I go back and recover my watch. Today I don't have a penny on me. If you have a fiver, do please lend it to me. I will return it tomorrow' Rahmat Khan knew there was no question of its repayment. Quietly he took out a fiver and gave it to the constable. It was good riddance at that price.

"After the constable had gone Rahmat Khan went to the watchman and said 'This fellow has been pestering us all these days. We are going to take up a room in some other *serai*.' 'This constable is a bastard, said the watchman. 'I have been observing him for the last five days. I have just given him a bit of my mind. I trust he won't visit you again.'

"After that Rahmat Khan went to you, and you know the rest of the story" Bose Babu concluded.

Meanwhile, Amarnath and Rahmat Khan returned with the luggage from the *serai*. We had our dinner and listened to a news broadcast over the radio. After the broadcast, Bose Babu asked me for a summary of the important happenings of the last two weeks on the various war fronts and in India. He had not listened to any news since January 19.

I repeated to him all the news I could recall. I told him that I was getting the *Civil and Military Gazette* from the British Legation, and in the morning would get him back issues for the last two weeks. I related to him the radio story of the Sadhu's arrest in Hardwar and Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar's theory of his renouncing the world and becoming a hermit.

Bose Babu was greatly amused by these stories.

That night, I did not want to trouble him with more questions. It was already getting late. So we all retired.

Entering my room, I found my wife still sitting up. "Why didn't you go to sleep?" I asked. "I tried my best to sleep but could not," she said. "How do you expect me to have any peace of mind with these two mysterious strangers in the House?"

She went on plying questions at me about the identity of the two strangers

"I have already told you the full truth about them," I protested "What more do you expect me to tell you?"

"I know how correct are the facts you have given me. Now tell me what is the story about that constable from whose clutches they escaped after surrendering their watch and bribing him with money." "So you have been eavesdropping on us. He was only telling an old story," I said.

"I might have listened in at the door or anywhere else that has nothing to do with you. How innocent you pretend to be?"

"Well, if you already know everything, why do you keep pestering me?" I said "I have told you that they come from Laghman. One of them, poor fellow, is ill. He cannot go out of the house. The other, too has to stay indoors to look after him."

"Now I understand what you are up to," she almost cried "They are a strange kind of guests." I put my hand to her mouth and said "Don't you start shouting. What will they think of us if they hear you?"

She pushed my hand aside. "Why shouldn't I talk loudly?" she shouted back "They are strange guests who will keep hiding day and night in the house. I won't allow it. I don't know who they are. I won't keep any man in my house in your absence. If you have to hide them, make some other arrange-

ment for them. There is no place in my house for Muslims. And if you insist on keeping them in the house without consent."

### TRUTH TOLD

So far I had thought I could get away with my story. But seeing her condition, I realized the best thing would be to tell her everything. It may be, I thought, the guests would stay with us for a long time. It would help matters if she knew the truth.

So I told her the whole story. Fear gripped her. "If anyone comes to know of their presence here," she said, "what a great calamity it will be for us? They will be arrested; and we don't know what hardships we shall have to undergo."

I said it would be impossible for anyone to know if we were careful. It would be a disgrace if Bose Babu was ever arrested in our house. We had got to see to it that no one got any inkling of his presence, howsoever long Bose Babu stayed with us.

My wife was a changed person now. "It is our moral duty to help Bose Babu to the best of our ability. Even if I have to lose my life, I shall not hesitate," she said. "By God's grace we have got such a splendid opportunity to serve our country."

I felt greatly heartened. I owe her a great debt. It was her great resourcefulness and courage that made it possible for us to shelter Bose Babu so long. She took such detailed precautions that not even our neighbours knew anything about

the guests during their 48 days' stay.

Next morning I was held up looking after Bose Babu's comforts and could not go to my shop in time. Bose Babu asked what time I usually went to the shop. I said between 10 and 10.30. It was already 12. Bose Babu was very upset. "You must go to the shop at the usual time," he told me. "Do not wait for my lunch. Your going to the shop late is bound to cause suspicion."

Before going to the shop, I left all the back issues of the *Civil and Military Gazette* which Bose Babu wanted with him, locked his room and gave the key to my wife.

During the day, we used to lock up Bose Babu's room so that if any neighbours or relatives turned up by chance they couldn't get into that room.

### BOSE TELLS THE STORY

That night as we sat chatting before dinner I said to him "Bose Babu, if it is not too much of a bother, I would like to hear from your own lips the story of your escape from India."

"It has long been my intention to go to Moscow," he began. "For many days no proper arrangements could be made. The party which had promised to arrange my escape to Moscow wanted to smuggle me out of India, two months ago. But it was impossible for me to get out of India then. Firstly, there was some urgent business of the Calcutta Corporation. Secondly, I had not been able to grow a beard, so essential for effective dis-

guise. That is why, at that stage I refused to go. Now I realize how much easier it would have been then to reach Moscow. The person who was to come along with me had very good contacts in the Russian Embassy here. When I didn't agree to accompany him, he went away alone and at the present moment is in Moscow.

"After setting the Corporation business (there was a dispute about some plot of land), I stopped leaving my house on the pretext that my health had been shattered and that doctors had advised complete rest. I gave strict instructions that no one should try to see me. If anybody wanted me he could talk to me on the telephone. No visitors were allowed. A few days before my escape, I forbade even my relations from entering my room and ordered the servant who brought my food to leave it on the table outside.

"In the meantime, I sent word to those who were to arrange my escape, and settled the date of my disappearance with them. When my beard was 40 days' old, that is on January 15, all arrangements were complete. At 8 o'clock in the evening I set out of the house disguised as a Maulvi, got into a car and motored down to a railway station 40 miles from Calcutta. (He told me the name of the station, but I don't remember it now) There I bought a second class ticket for Peshawar and got into the mail train. That night's journey passed off safely. The next day, a military Sikh passenger came into my compartment. We sat facing each other,

"In the course of our conversation, the Sikh asked me where I came from and the purpose of my journey. I said I came from Lucknow and Ziauddin was my name and that I was an insurance organizer on my way to Rawalpindi. He was with me in the train the whole day. Every time the train halted at a station, I hid my face behind a newspaper.

### "EVERY INCH A MAULVI"

"I was dressed in tight pyjamas, a *sherwani*, and a fez cap. It would have been difficult for anyone to recognize me in that *ensemble*, and particularly with my long beard. I looked every inch a Maulvi. The whole journey was uneventful. At 9 o'clock in the night on the January 17, I reached Peshawar. A car was waiting for me at the station, and took me straightaway to the appointed place."

"I had to spend two days in Peshawar," Bose Babu continued, "as my friends had also to make the arrangements for my journey to Kabul. I cannot help admiring those friends for the remarkably foolproof arrangements they had made for Peshawar. No one got the slightest inkling of my two days' stay in Peshawar. On January 19 I was given Pathan clothes. Looking like a Pathan would be much safer in Afghanistan, everyone thought, than looking like a U P Maulvi. Rahmat Khan another friend and I got into a car and drove out of Peshawar on the road to Jamrud. A little distance from the Jamrud Fort, a *kacha* road branches off in another direction. We took that road. At last

we reached a small village called Garhi. Since the motor road ended there, we had to leave the car. We spent the night in Garhi. Next day, Rahmat Khan and I and two Pathans, who were armed with guns to protect us, left on foot for Kabul. The friend who had come with us from Peshawar returned with the car. It was arranged that henceforth I was to pretend that I was deaf and dumb.

### IN THE TRIBAL AREA

" Next evening, we crossed the Indian border, and reached a village of the border tribes. There is a famous shrine called Addah Sharif there. A *Pir* lives there. He had made all arrangements for our stay. After the rugged roads we had trudged on, all of us were dead tired. We spent the night in the *Pir*'s mosque.

" The two armed Pathans who had escorted us from Garhi now dropped out of the party, but three others, also armed with guns, accompanied us on our next day's journey. It was a difficult route, and often we had to stop on the way for rest. We reached Lalpura at about 9 o'clock in the evening. Here also everything had been arranged for us in advance and we spent the night comfortably. Our host was a big Khan of the Place, actually the local ruling chief, and much respected in Afghan Government circles.

" I had become absolutely exhausted by now. I was, however, assured that we had to walk only a few more miles to reach the Kabul river. 'Once you cross the Kabul river,' I was

told, 'you reach the motor road on which you can catch buses going to Kabul.'

"Before we left Lalpura, our host gave us an introduction so that if anyone suspected us on the way we could display it and escape harassment. He said that if we used that introduction no one would give us any trouble in Afghanistan"

I myself read Lalpura Chief's introduction. It was in Persian and said that Rahmat Khan and Ziauddin were inhabitants of the tribal area and were going on a pilgrimage to Sakhi Sahib's shrine. 'I am personally responsible for their conduct,' it said, 'and have given them this certificate so that no one may harass them.'

I asked Bose Babu why they didn't show the certificate to the constable who was harassing them in the *serai* "We did show it to him," replied Bose Babu "That is really why we escaped his clutches. We showed it to him the day we had to part with the watch. Before we showed it to him he was bullying us, but cooled down later. But it was money he wanted, not a certificate of our good character"

### CROSSING THE KABUL RIVER

"When we left Lalpura," Bose Babu resumed his story, "two armed men were escorting us. After walking a few miles we reached the Kabul river. There was no boat in which we could cross the river. The people there rope together a number of large leather water bags to make a boat. I was afraid at first,

but seeing others cross the river without fear, I didn't mind crossing it like that. And so we sat on a fisherman's net spread on those leather bags and crossed the river.

"We now entered Afghan territory where it is forbidden to go about with arms. We left our armed escorts behind on the tribal side of the river. That is how we avoided Dukka (A village 50 miles from Peshawar. Travellers going and coming between Kabul and Peshawar have to show their passports there, and submit to a search of their luggage to prevent customs evasion) We were told that between Peshawar and Dukka alone, passports are checked at three places. So in trying to avoid all these places, we chose the alternative three days' route, through difficult country.

### A NIGHT OR RISKS

"Near the road, there was what the people of the locality call a *chungi*, a clump of big trees and a well. Waiting for the bus, I lay down under the trees while Rahmat Khan stood and waved to every passing bus going towards Kabul. The buses ignored us. Fatigue made me doze off. It was already evening when Rahmat Khan woke me up. Near me stood a lorry. I was asked to clamber into it. I was at my wit's end. The lorry was full of boxes and there was no room to sit. 'Why don't you climb on top of the boxes?' the cleaner shouted at me. So we got on top of the boxes. It was a snowy winter evening and all around us was an open expanse of plain. We didn't have any warm

clothes to protect us against this cold. It was difficult even to open one's eyes. As we were sitting so high there was the danger of the branches of the trees lining the road striking us down and every now and then we had to duck to escape disaster. On the whole it was a nightmare. I asked Rahmat Khan whether we couldn't get a better vehicle. 'I must have waved to nearly 15 lorries to stop,' he said, 'but none of them stopped. Only this one responded to my waving.' If we had not got into it, we would not have got a lorry at all and would have been forced to spend the night in that *chungi*.'

"The whole night," continued Bose Babu, "we had to spend in that bus. Several times on the way, we had to take tea to keep ourselves warm. If we hadn't, perhaps we wouldn't have been alive now."

"The second day, we reached Butkhak. Here, passports were examined and bribes taken. We were asked the purpose of our journey. Rahmat Khan, pointing to me, said 'This is my elder brother. He is both deaf and dumb. I am taking him to Sukhi Sahib's shrine. We belong to the free tribal area.' He produced the Lalpura Khan's certificate which silenced the interrogating officer."

"We took tea and got into the lorry again and between four and five in the afternoon reached Kabul. We had already taken care to bring Afghan money with us from Peshawar. The rest of the story you have already heard from me yesterday," Bose Babu concluded.

Just then my little daughter brought in the food. As we ate, we listened to the radio.

When the news broadcast was over, I said

"Rahmat Khan has told me that you have established contact with the Italians here. "Don't you want to go to Moscow any more ? If you do, why did you contact the Italians ?"

"I haven't yet given up the idea of going to Moscow," Bose replied promptly. "If we have contacted the Italians, it is only because we have been compelled to do so. My friends made all arrangements for our journey to Kabul. But they could not make proper arrangements for us in Kabul. Rahmat Khan is as much a stranger here as I am. Even his Pushto is of little help here. Those who sent him with me did not think it would be difficult for us to contact the Russians here. They obviously did not know that it is even difficult to enter the Russian Legation. Its gate is always closed and the Afghan police stand guard on it all day and night. Our friends were under the illusion that as soon as my name is revealed to the Russian Ambassador and he is told that I was here, he would at once arrange for a plane to take me to Moscow.

"After breakfast, on the day following our arrival in Kabul

we went out in search of the Russian Legation. Of course we couldn't ask anybody. So we roamed about the city. We saw the Italian, Egyptian, Iranian and Greek Legations and were surprised to see Afghan police guarding the gate of every legation and embassy building. It is not the practice anywhere in Europe. The guards, moreover, try to identify everybody who goes in. In Europe, you can walk into any legation you like and there is no one to stop you.

"We were not able to locate the Russian Legation. We could not walk any more. We were dead tired and our Peshawar *chappals* made walking difficult on snow. So we returned to our *serai*. We slept like logs that night.

"It was broad daylight when I woke up. We had our breakfast and again set out in search of the Russian Legation. For about two hours we roamed about in the quarter where the rest of the legations were situated but could not spot out the Soviet Legation. We continued our search in other parts of the town. And then suddenly I saw a building flying the Red Flag.

"We now knew it for certain it was the Russian Legation. The gate was closed and the inevitable Afghan policeman stood guard on it. We sat down a little distance away from the building wondering what to do next. We could not enter the legation unless we first proved our identity. Moreover there could be no question of our being allowed inside in the dress we were wearing. All the time I was cursing both myself and those who organized my escape. It was outrageous of my friends to have sent me

along like this They should have at least sent me with some one who had previous contacts with the Russians, or means of contacting them now We again returned to the *seas* dejected I even lost my appetite

"Till late that night, we were awake, discussing and thinking out what to do next At last we hit upon a plan 'Tomorrow we shall wait near the Legation,' we decided 'If at any time the Ambassador's car comes out, we shall stop it on the road and talk to him' There was no other way of seeing him

#### AMBASSADOR'S CAR

"So next morning we again walked up to the Soviet Legation We waited a long time Several cars went in and came out We could not tell whether the occupants were Russians It was already 4-30 p m Disappointed again, we were preparing to leave, when the Legation's gate opened again, and a car came out flying a tiny Russian flag We felt that its occupant must be the Ambassador During the last three days we had come to know that only Ambassador's cars flew their national flags When the car passed by us, Rahmat Khan waved towards it The car stopped In his halting Persian, Rahmat Khan told the man occupying the back seat of his car something about me I was standing at some distance from the car I saw Rahmat Khan pointing towards me. Later Rahmat Khan told me what passed between him and the Ambassador.

"Rahmat Khan told the Ambassador that he had brought

Subhas Chandra Bose to Kabul. (Bose was wanting to go to Moscow. Could the Ambassador help him to get there? 'Where is he?' asked the Ambassador. "There,' Rahmat Khan said pointing towards me 'How am I to make sure that the person is really Subhas Chandra Bose? How can I help you without any proof of his identity?' said the Ambassador. He paused for Rahmat Khan's reply, but Rahmat Khan had no reply. The car moved on.

"I was very sorry to learn all this from Rahmat Khan we had missed a big opportunity. Language difficulty, of course, prevented Rahmat Khan from promptly replying to the Ambassador. But our preparation was faulty

"Helpless, we returned to the *serai*. Rahmat Khan suggested our sending back word to Peshawar. 'May be on hearing about our present plight they might send some one who has contacts with the Russians,' he said. 'But there is the problem of a reliable person to take our message to them.' I said, 'and even if the message does reach them, what can they do?' If they could manage it earlier, they probably would not have left us to our own resources.' However, we decided to send a message to a comrade in Peshawar through a lorry driver

"Next day Rahmat Khan went with the message to the lorry driver. He returned after some time and said that he had managed to send a message to Peshawar through a reliable lorry driver. That very evening Rahmat Khan told me about the C.I.D constable, whose story you have already heard. This was an

additional worry. Life was already grim. This made things much worse.

### ITALIANS CONTACTED

"In any case, instead of waiting for doubtful help from Peshawar, we had to fall back on our own resources. I said to Rahmat Khan 'The message has gone to Peshawar, but who knows when the reply will come? Here, the Russians have almost said no. I don't know whether they really do not want to help me, or it is because they are not convinced I am Subhas Bose. In these circumstances, we had better establish contact with the Axis legations. If, in the meantime, some arrangement can be made by our friends in Peshawar about our going to Moscow, well and good. Otherwise, I think the Axis legations will accept me without any hesitation, and I shall be able to get out of this country at the earliest. We have not yet seen the German Legation. Besides it is no use looking for it. We have already seen the Italian Legation. Since one is as good as the other, you must find a way to visit this legation and inform the *Charge d' Affaires* about me. I am sure they will be glad to hear of my presence here and won't refuse help to me. And since there is now only one route to Europe, and that lies *via* Moscow I shall get down at Moscow or arrange through the Russian Embassy in Berlin or in Rome to come back to Moscow."

"That night," Bose Babu continued, "we lay awake till late thinking over this plan. Rahmat Khan agreed with me that

I should try to get out of this country as soon as possible. Next day Rahmat Khan went to see the Italian *Charge d' Affaires* At the Legation gate, the Afghan policeman stopped him. But Rahmat Khan pretended to be the watchman at the Japanese Legation and succeeded in gaining admission He saw Signor Karoni, the *Charge d' Affaires*, and told him all about me He was very happy to hear of my presence in Kabul and said to Rahmat Khan 'I shall send word to Rome and Berlin this very day and will arrange for a passport during the next few days 'We shall try to get him out of this country as soon as possible ' For further communications, Signor Karoni fixed up the place of a German living in Kabul, Herr Thomas, ' since Rahmat Khan had told him about the difficulties in gaining access to the Legation and had asked for a place where he could easily come and go while Rahmat Khan was leaving. Signor Karoni said 'I expect to hear from Berlin and Rome in two days So you better see Herr Thomas on the third day There we will leave a sealed envelope for you '

"Herr Thomas was a German who had come to Afghanistan as the representative of several German firms ' Since he was interested in all kinds of business, any one could walk into his office without arousing suspicion In fact, most of the German who were in Kabul at the time were really fifth columnists and their business activities were a mere cover for their political work

"I was, of course, glad to hear from Rahmat Khan about the Italian's assurances' I am not quite happy about going to

Berlin or Rome But there is no choice What we have done is in sheer desperation,"

Bose Babu next told me "You have been living here for such a long time, if you have any contacts with the Russian Embassy do arrange an interview for me with the Russian Ambassador"

I replied that though I had been living in Kabul for a long time, I had no contacts with anyone in the Soviet Embassy I had no intention of doing any political work in Kabul I had also heard that the Russian Embassy fellows were a very suspicious lot "But now that you have come, I shall try to contact them," I concluded

"Please do," Bose Babu said. "Even if everything is fixed up with the Italian Legation and the Russians decide to accept me, I shall change my plans"

#### AVIS PLEASED

On the appointed day Rahmat Khan went to Herr Thomas. He gave him a sealed envelope It said

"The same day I got your letter, I informed Berlin and Rome about your arrival here Responsible quarters there have expressed great pleasure at the news, and send you their congratulations on your remarkable escape I have orders to help you, in a few days all the arrangements for you will be complete. Yours, KARONI'

"Next day I wrote out the following reply and sent it

through Herr Thomas.

" 'Glad to have your message. Thank you very much for your efforts to arrange for a passport. The sooner it is arranged the better, because my remaining in a place like this is very risky. Please convey my thanks to the responsible men in Berlin and Rome who have sent me their good wishes.' "

## 6

On February 5, Rahmat Khan told me, "Today I will also come to the bazaar with you. I am fed up sitting here day and night. I will go to Herr Thomas and see whether there is another message for us". But Bose Babu wouldn't allow it.

"It is not safe," he said. "Uttam Chand can go to Herr Thomas. If there is any message, we shall know."

I too advised Rahmat Khan not to go out. "What if that C.I.D. fellow whom you have given the slip happens to see you? I can go and see Herr Thomas."

Being a radio dealer, I knew there was a German firm in Kabul dealing in radio sets. But I did not know that it was Herr Thomas's firm.

After finding out Herr Thomas' address, I suggested to Bose Babu "Why should not my shop be the clearing house for messages, instead of Herr Thomas' place? That will save us much botheration and risk. Frequent visits to Herr Thomas' shop may create suspicion."

"That is a good idea," said Bose. "Rahmat Khan tells me that Herr Thomas' chauffeur is an Indian who works for the

British Secret Service for whenever Rahmat Khan goes to Herr Thomas' house, this person stares hard at him "

" No one would suspect me," I said, "because the whole of Kabul knows I am a radio dealer."

### BOSE ASKS FOR PASSPORT

Bose next wrote down a message for Signor Karoni and gave it to me to deliver to Herr Thomas. It said

"Sensing some danger in the *serai*, we have shifted to the house of a friend. He has a crockery and radio shop by the river in the new building. Rahmat Khan went to Herr Thomas second time, but we have not heard from you yet. I hope you have completed the arrangements for the passport. I shall be grateful if you could let us know soon. In future if you want to send me a message, please send it to my friend's shop. I do not think it is wise to send someone to Herr Thomas every day"

I took the letter from Bose, locked up his room, gave the key to my wife and came to my shop. I went to Herr Thomas' shop at about 12 o'clock, the time fixed for the meeting.

Herr Thomas had just come out of his office and was about to go home for lunch. I went up to him and said I wanted to see Herr Thomas as I had urgent business with him. He took me to his office and said "It is me" I handed him the envelope and asked him if he had any message for Bose. He had no message to give me.

That afternoon the Haji came to my shop and asked about

Bose. "Let me at least see him once," he begged I did not want him to meet Bose but as he knew about his presence in my house, I could not afford to offend him "I will ask Bose Babu," I said "If he agrees, I will take you to him tomorrow"

At night we again discussed politics and listened to the radio. Accidentally I tuned in to Calcutta, which was broadcasting Bengali music at the moment. Bose listened to it for a while and then asked me to tune in to some other station "But the music is so good," I protested. "None of you here except myself speaks this language," said Bose. "Your neighbours may begin to suspect."

Later I told Bose Babu about my meeting with Herr Thomas and my talk with the Haji. He did not want to meet anybody But when I told him how the Haji knew the secret, he agreed to see him next day.

### STRANGER SEES BOSE

On the 6th something happened which caused us great concern Just as we were having our morning tea, my neighbour, who lived in the ground floor flat, happened to come into our flat on his way to the terrace The verandah where we sat was across his path We came to know of his presence only after he had seen us It was my little daughter's mistake We always used to keep the entrance door of Bose's room closed. Only that day she forgot to shut the door

We used to call our neighbour Mr. 'R' Mr. R's face turned

pale on seeing Bose. He stood glued to the spot for a while. I knew for certain that he had recognised Bose. Bose too felt alarmed "It was a blunder letting the door remain open" he said.

I knew Mr. 'R' very well and I was sure that even if he had recognized Bose, he would not do any thing to harm us. He had often discussed with me the many stories about Bose's disappearance and talked about Indian freedom.

It is true that it was difficult for any one to recognize Bose in that condition. He had grown a long beard. The only thing which could help Mr 'R' to recognize Bose was his pair of glasses and Bose had them on at that time

On the way to my shop, I only kept thinking about the complication. I was afraid Mr 'R' had gone to seek somebody's advice in the matter

All through the day I roamed about the bazar and went out of my way to see some of Mr 'Rs' friends, hoping to hear something from them. But I could not get anything out of them

That evening I brought the Hajji to my house to see Bose. No sooner had I entered the house, I was told that Mr 'R' was seriously ill. He had diarrhoea and had been, unconscious for some time.

#### MR. 'R' ILL

On the morning of February 7, Mr. 'R' came to me and said "I can't stay in this house any more. I am afraid. That is why I fell ill."

"There is nothing in this house to make you afraid," I told him. "After all we have been in this house so long."

"I sense the presence of a spirit in this house," he said. "It may be I have annoyed it."

"Personally I do not believe in such things" I replied  
"There must be some other reason for your departure"

I first wanted to be sure whether it was Bose who had frightened him out of his wits.

"You may not believe in these things, but I do," replied Mr 'R', "Why don't you tell me the truth?" I insisted.

"The truth is," he confessed at last, "that my wife is compelling me to leave this house. She says it is now three or four days since two strangers have been staying in your house. She does not like to stay here any longer."

"It is true," I said, "that I have two guests putting up with me. They are my relations from Laghman. One of them has come here for treatment. He has to stay indoors all the time I hope they will go away in a few days. As for your wife's objection, she is not the only woman living in this house. I too have a wife and children."

"Don't you get angry," said Mr. 'R.' "That is why I did not want to tell you the plain truth. Considering my present state of health, if I stay here for a day longer, you must despair of my life. Don't you worry about the rent. I shall continue to pay my share as before."

## BACK TO 'SERAI'

Mr. 'R' vacated the house soon after that. I was glad he had left, but I was worried too. May be, I thought, he gets us caught. If any thing had happened while he was here, he too would have been involved in it. Now that he had left the house, I could not ignore the danger. After he was gone, we decided that Bose Babu and Rahmat Khan should shift to a *serai* for a few days. If in two or three days nothing happened they could come back again. What I was anxious about was that even if Mr 'R' did some mischief, no harm should come to Bose Babu and Rahmat Khan.

I sent Amarnath along with Rahmat Khan to look for a room in some *serai*. After visiting three *serais*, they fixed up a room in one of them. With the necessary luggage Bose Babu and Rahmat Khan moved to that *serai*.

The day after Mr 'R' left the house, a friend of his came to me and pestered me with questions asking why Mr 'R' had left the house. Had we quarrelled? Had our wives quarrelled? I said I knew nothing and asked him to find out from Mr 'R' himself.

That day Rahmat Khan came thrice to find out if there was any message from the Italians. There was no message. If there was any, I told him, I would send it along through Amarnath.

In the evening when I returned home, I gathered that Mrs. 'R' had paid a visit to my wife and during the conversation inquired about the guests. She told her that they felt hurt, left

the house in disgust and returned to their village the same day "Your husband should not have behaved like that," she said Mrs 'R' was surprised "What did my husband say," she asked "which made you so angry "

"What more could he say ?" my wife replied "He put us to shame, said you did not want to stay here, because you had guests who did not go out even during the day "

"Sister, by God, whatever he said, he said it on his own. I did not know that you have two guests staying with you during the day," said Mrs 'R'

"Mr 'R' should not have left in such haste," my wife repeated "After all, I know what I am saying If you don't believe me ask him when you go back home."

"I shall certainly go and ask him," said Mrs. 'R'. But if he did say so, I beg you to forgive us "

"I wonder if you know that big man from Calcutta—I forget his name—has disappeared," Mrs. 'R' resumed, after a little pause.

"Yes, I had heard it over the radio This kind of thing you hear over the radio day after day But what do you mean by it?" my wife asked

"Nothing at all," assured Mrs. 'R' "I just asked, because I have also heard over the radio that he has disappeared and the Government is hot on his trail "

"How does it concern me, if the Government is on the look-out for him?" my wife retorted

As Mrs. 'R' was about to leave, my wife, without making it too pointed, took her all over the house, so that she did not return with the idea that our guests were still there.

### SIGNORA KARONI

On the 9th, Signora Karoni (wife of the Italian *Charge d'Affaires*) came to my shop, and asked me my name. When I told her my name, she gave me a sealed envelope, and said. "I am the Ambassador's wife. Give this envelope to your friend. We are so glad he is staying with you. I guess you took the last letter from him to Herr Thomas in which he asked us to send any message we had for him through you" She said she would call again the day after for the reply. The letter she brought read

'Your letter. We are glad to hear you have moved from the *serai* to your friend's house. In compliance with your instructions, we shall send messages to your friend's shop and pick up messages intended for us from there. We have conveyed your message of thanks to Rome and Berlin. We are trying our best to secure the passport. We have asked our embassy in Moscow to arrange and as soon as it is arranged, we shall let you know."

I sent for Rahmat Khan from the *serai* and gave him the letter. I also posted him with the conversation that had taken place between my wife and Mrs 'R.'

That day we did not hear anything more about Mr. 'R.' Our common friends were still intrigued at Mr. 'R's sudden move to another house. Mr. 'R's stock reply to his friends who asked



from India to Moscow through Afghanistan, a hectic search must be going on here. I knew the consequence of his being discovered in your house. I have small children I was not under any circumstance prepared to suffer the consequences. I can't help admiring you and your wife, for what you have done."

"Your rash action," I said, "has done us great harm. When Bose Babu came to know how you had reacted to his presence, he was so much annoyed that he left the house the same day. We do not know where he is now, wandering from place to place."

Mr. 'R' replied. "Brother, the mischief has been done. No what can I do?"

"What can we do now?" I said. "He has gone away from my house. It is quite possible he is still in the town. But one thing I may tell you. If he is arrested here, the entire responsibility and shame will be on you."

## 7

At 12 o'clock as soon as I reached my shop, Rahmat Khan came in looking worried. I asked him if everything was all right. He said Bose Babu had been suddenly taken ill. The bazaar food had given him dysentery. We couldn't get anything in the bazaar except dry bread and *kabab*. I am wondering what to do. I cannot even have him examined by a doctor. I have come to seek your advice."

"What advice can I give?" I said. "I have told you everything about Mr 'R.' The danger from that quarter is not yet over. But it is not safe too, to let Bose Babu remain in the *serai* in this condition. It may shatter his health. So my advice is that you both come back to my bouse. We shall treat him at home. I hope he will recover soon."

Rahmat Khan agreed with me and promised to return to my house along with Bose Babu at 7 o'clock in the evening.

They came at about 7-30. No one in the locality knew Bose was looking very pale. Dysentery was obviously causing him great discomfort. But after a few days' treatment at home he was normal again.

Back in my house, Bose and Rahmat Khan began leading a fairly carefree life. As before, while leaving the house, I used to lock up Bose Babu's room and hand over the key to my wife. My wife took every precaution not to arouse the slightest suspicion among the neighbours. Even when Bose coughed, she would raise a loud noise in order to drown the sound of his coughing and prevent it from reaching any of the neighbours. Though it had stopped snowing in Kabul, it was still cold and all the women of the neighbourhood used to come out on the roofs of their houses to warm themselves in the sun. There was always the danger of sound of Bose Babu's coughing reaching them. My wife's tactics removed the danger.

### HITCH AT MOSCOW

A week went by, but there was no news from the Italian Legation. Signora Karoni dropped in at my shop again, once or twice, but brought no message. Every time I asked her about the passport, she said "I don't know why it is getting delayed. We remind Rome every day but there is no satisfactory explanation for this delay from there."

When Bose Babu recovered, Rahmat Khan again started coming out into the Bazaar. After a week when there was no satisfactory reply from the Italians, Bose gave me a note to be sent through Herr Thomas to Signor Karoni. The note reminded the Italian *Charge d' Affaires* that three weeks had gone by since Bose contacted him, and it was already a fortnight since he

got his last message to the effect that the Axis Embassies at Moscow had been asked to arrange for his passport. The delay was inexplicable. "I hope you realize that I cannot manage to prolong my stay here indefinitely," the note concluded "Please expedite the passport as much as you can"

The next day Signora Karoni happened to look in I gave her Bose Babu's note Next day she returned with a sealed envelope for Bose

Signor Karoni's reply said that a copy of Bose's note had been sent to Rome He fully realized Bose's situation but he too was helpless in the matter He was afraid there was some hitch at Moscow about the passport He would know what it was in a couple of days As soon as he heard from Moscow he would inform Bose

After reading the letter, Bose asked me if I had made any attempt to contact the Russian Legation I said I had tried my best, but had had no luck A Russian had come to buy a radio set from my shop and I had tried to open the subject with him but he had refused to discuss politics with me. He gave no satisfactory answer to any of my questions I also asked one or two other friends to try to contact the Russians. They were all shopkeepers and Russians often visited their shops But I doubted whether any of them would succeed

#### UNDELIVERED LETTER

"Do one thing," Bose Babu suggested "If you know

them well, I will give you a letter. Send it through one of them to the Russian Ambassador. Since the Russians often come to you and your friends' shops, none of them should mind carrying a letter for his Ambassador. But whoever is the person to whom you give this letter, give it only on condition that he hands it over to the Ambassador personally." I said I would do as he wished.

Bose Babu wrote out a long letter for the Russian Ambassador in which he related the entire story of his escape from India, his arrival here, and also the incident of his stopping the Ambassador's car on the way and attempting to talk to him, and finally asked for an interview, requesting that the reply be sent to my shop.

I took that letter and tried to get some Russian from among the contacts of my friends to carry it to the Soviet Ambassador, but none of them was prepared to take it to him.

Russia and Germany were still at peace. Country after country was falling to the Germans. Every week there was a victory banquet or party at the German Legation, attended by Russian, Italian, Japanese and other Ambassadors. The Russian Ambassador also once in a while threw a party in return.

There was a German national in Kabul those days named— He had come to Kabul as a representative of a German dyes and chemicals firm. One of my friends was a dealer in dyes and through him I came to know this German. He had recently attended one of the dinners at the Russian Embassy, and was

going to another dinner to be held shortly. I asked if he would mind taking a letter from me to the Russian Ambassador on condition that he handed it over personally to the Ambassador. He agreed at the moment but next day refused to take it. "Our Ambassador has forbidden us to deal directly with the Russian Ambassador in any manner," he said. "His express orders are that any one who has any business with the Russian Ambassador, should deal with him through the German Ambassador. If you permit I will ask my Ambassador's permission and if he allows me to carry the letter, I will take it."

I was not prepared to accept this condition, because Bose Babu did not want the Axis Embassies to know that we were trying to contact the Russians.

#### "COURIER" EXPECTED

Two days later Signora Karoni brought another note. In this the Italian envoy said that his earlier suspicion that there had been some hitch at Moscow about the passport had been confirmed. The Axis Embassies in Moscow were trying their best to secure permission for Bose to pass through Russia on his way to Berlin or Rome but the Russian Government was not at all prepared to grant him the passage. With the greatest difficulty they had been able to get the Russians to agree to their request. "Couriers for you are expected from Rome", it concluded, "As soon as they arrive your passage will be arranged. I hope there will be no further delay now."

I asked Bose Babu what on earth was a courier. He said a courier meant a messenger. But his own suspicion was that they had been unable to get a passport for him, and were sending somebody whom he was to impersonate, take his place and go back.

Another week passed, but there was no further news. Signora Karoni came to my shop every second or third day and inquired after Bose's health. Whenever there were other customers in the shop, she would buy something or ask for the price of a few articles and go away saying "I will come tomorrow and buy it"

Bose Babu also felt like going out into the bazaar. He was tired of being confined to one room day and night. Rahmat Khan by now knew his way about all the Kabul bazaars. Bose Babu had no other clothes except his Pathan dress. I wanted him to go out in the usual dress of the country. So I gave him my flannel suit which fitted him exactly. I gave him a pair of my shoes too, but they were too tight, so he said the first thing they would do on going to the bazaar would be to buy a pair of shoes. On his head he had my Afghan cap. In that dress he looked like an Afghan.

Bose Babu and Rahmat Khan went out, bought a pair of shoes and roamed about the town the whole day. They came to my shop in the evening and all of us returned home together.

"PROFESSOR ZIAUDDIN"

At night Bose Babu said, "The shop from which we

bought the pair of shoes belongs to an Indian .. As he heard us talking, he understood we were Indians He asked me if I was an Indian I told him I was I said I was working as a professor in the Habibia College and my name was Ziauddin. He was surprised that, though he knew all the Indian professors who worked here, he had never seen me I explained that I had arrived in Kabul only a few days ago, and not knowing the language of the country, was not going out much. The shop-keeper was so absorbed in his conversation with me that he even forgot to give me the shoes Realizing that it was not safe to prolong the talk, I told him I had some urgent work waiting for me and asked him to pack up my shoes immediately While we were about to leave, he asked me if I would mind coming to tea, but I excused myself saying that I was very busy these days Now he may go to the Habibia College any day looking for Prof Ziauddin " We had a hearty laugh

During one of the talks I asked Bose his main object in going to Moscow

He said "The Russians and the Germans have just concluded a non-aggression pact Germany is at war with Britain Russia is an enemy of Britain This is the time to go to Moscow and do propaganda for Indian freedom "

"The Russians and the Germans are at peace just now," I said, "but still there is little in common between their ideologies Who can say that even now there is no preparation for a war between them under the cover of friendship ? And then, will

the Russians allow you to carry on propaganda against the British?"

"It may be," Bose Babu replied, "that the friendship between Russia and Germany does not last long and they might go to war. But the political situation today is changing so fast that we do not know what may happen within the next 24 hours. No one ever imagined that Russia and Germany could conclude a pact of friendship. But that is how things developed. Even if there is an under current of hostility between Germany and Russia, the British too are no friends of Russia. I am sure the Russians will let me carry on propaganda against the British."

### THE IRISH PARALLEL

"But do you think India will get her freedom merely through propaganda?" I asked.

"My own conviction is that the British will not quit India till they are thrown out by a bloody revolution," he said. "They have never freed any country peacefully. Look at Ireland. Remember, the Irish are their own kith and kin. When after 700 years of struggle and suffering, Ireland did win her freedom, the British even then kept a small part of Irish territory for themselves. How can they give up India voluntarily? It is true anti-British propaganda abroad will not win us freedom. But just now they are engaged in a life-and-death struggle and my propagandas will definitely do them considerable harm."

"But then do you think India cannot have a revolution like

the one which took place in Ireland?" I asked

"The conditions which the British have created in India make such a revolution impossible. It is very difficult to create conditions in India in which we can throw the British out. Again such a revolution cannot be brought about without the help of a foreign power. Even Russia owes her revolution to Germany and America won her independence with the help of France"

"Do you mean to say," I asked, "that you are going to Russia to try to obtain her help in the liberation of India?"

"Yes, that is my real object," he confessed. "I want to persuade the Russians to help us. If I fail in this, I can always do anti-British propaganda. If I had stayed back in India the Government would have kept me in prison for the duration of the war. And I am sure, all the big leaders of the country will also be put in prison. I preferred to escape and do whatever I can for the independence of my country, rather than rot in prison."

"But what will you do if you are not allowed to go to Moscow straight from here?" I asked

"Firstly I can make an attempt on my way to get down in Moscow and stay on there. If I do not succeed I will arrange it through the Russian Embassies in Berlin and Rome. I hope it will be arranged there, because there you can freely contact the Legations. In any case I hope to get to Moscow soon."

I exposed my doubts whether the Axis would let him go to

Moscow. In a war like this, if they get hold of an Indian of his status, I said, they would much rather put him to their own use than let him go to the Russians.

"I too know they will not give me up easily to the Russians," said Bose. "But I will do my best to get to Moscow. Today Russia is the only country which can help to liberate India. No other country will help us. That is why I do not want to go anywhere else but to Moscow. If India does not win the freedom during this war, she will not be able to get it for another fifty years, unless, of course, a bloody revolution takes place sooner."

#### IRON DICTATOR

I reminded him about religious dissensions in India, whereupon he said

"So long as there is a third party in the country, that is, the British, these dissensions will not end. They will go on growing. They will disappear only when an iron dictator rules India for twenty years. For a few years at least after the end of British rule in India, there must be a dictatorship. No other constitution can flourish in the country. And it is to India's good that she should be ruled by a dictator to begin with. None but a dictator can wipe out such dissensions. India does not suffer from one ailment. She suffers from so many political ills that only a ruthless dictator can cure her of these. India needs a Kamal Pasha."

"Do you think the Russian Ambassador refused to help you

on his own or is he only carrying out his Government's policy?" I asked

"How do I know that," Bose replied "If I had been to see him even once, I would have known what his Government's policy is. It may be that the attitude he has adopted towards me is on his own initiative. But, for this those who organized my coming here are responsible. If they had sent me along with a person who had previous contact with the Soviet Embassy, I am sure the Ambassador's attitude would have been different. But this news of Moscow's hesitation to let me pass through Russia which we have come to know from the Italians makes me suspicious. I wonder why the Russians do not permit me to pass through their country. It may be it is part of their policy not to accept me and the Russian Ambassador may have acted in accordance with this policy."

"There is, however, another aspect to it," continued Bose "When Rahmat Khan met the Ambassador, he refused help because he may have had no instructions about rendering this kind of help from his Government. He might have informed Moscow later of my presence here and new instructions might have come asking him to help me. Only he may not have been able to contact me as he did not know my address. And when the Axis asked permission for my passage through Russia, they must have refused, because they may have been wanting me to come to Moscow, and not fall into the hands of the Axis. This theory seems to me to be more plausible. The idea that they do not want me does not

make sense. But having no means of finding the truth, we cannot do anything but speculate."

For forty-five days Bose Babu was with me and not once, during this period did I hear one good word for the Axis from his lips. He hated them as much as the British. I am sure when he reached Berlin he must have made another attempt to get to Russia, through the Russian Embassy. But he must have failed again and the declaration of the Russo-German war must have finally dashed his hopes of reaching Russia. He reached Berlin on March 28, 1941, and on June 22, 1941, the Russo-German war was declared.

# 8

Another week passed without a message from the Indian Legation. Twice Signora Karoni came to my shop during this period, but both times she said the expected couriers had not yet arrived from Rome.

The delay caused increasing worry to Bose Babu. He felt terribly depressed. I often proposed a walk into the Bazaar but he would refuse to stir out of the house.

One day the Haji happened to invite him to tea. He accepted the invitation and went. After that he started paying frequent visits to the Haji's house.

One day Bose said "I wonder when the arrangements for my journey will be completed by these Italians. The couriers have not even started from Rome. I am fed up with life. I often wonder whether I did not make a great mistake in coming to this place. In any case I must get out of this wretched hole. If you have somebody who can escort me up to the Russian border, I would rather risk rotting in a Russian prison than stagnate here. At least there is some hope of reaching Moscow through Russian prisons. If you could only arrange this. Don't

bother about the expenses."

I said it was easy to find a man who could accompany him to the Russian border. I knew many who had slipped across the Russian frontier and returned. I was, however, afraid, I told Bose Babu, that such a journey might entail great hardship.

"Nothing can be worse than the present position," he replied promptly. "At the worst, the Russians will put me in jail. But when the Russian Government get to know that I am in one of their prisons, they will get me out."

I told him if such was the case, his escape to Russia could have been arranged long ago.

"Even now it is not too late," said Bose. "You look for a guide, and I have asked Rahmat Khan to get a road map of Afghanistan from the bazaar, so that we might find out the best route to the Russian border."

MR. M.

I knew a man who had several times been up to this side of the river hango, which divides Russia from Afghanistan, though he had never crossed to the Russian side of the river. He had, however, often told me it was easy to cross the river. His name was 'M'

'M' in fact belonged to the frontier area. He had committed a murder, and fled to Afghanistan and was passing his life there as an absconder. He called himself a "Mahaqir." He had now been there for twenty years, had married there, and be-

come an Afghan citizen. At one time he had also driven lorries, and gone as far as Pat Kesar, on the Afghan side of the Hangor river. He was a reliable man, but at the moment his finances were in a bad state due to long spells of unemployment. During the Afghan Independence Day celebrations he used to set up a modest gambling stall in the Carnival or joir in a racket and make some money on which he lived for the rest of the year. Such a type, I said to myself, would be more helpful than one with a political background whom we may find difficult to manage.

'M' used to pay me brief visits now and then. I always found him interesting. He had seen so much of the world. He had an inexhaustible stock of anecdotes, stories, and scandals which he narrated with gusto. He always posted me with the latest happenings in Kabul bazaar.

Soon after, Bose expressed his wish to be smuggled across the Afghan border into Russian territory, I came across 'M' in the bazaar. I asked him to come along with me to my shop and in the course of conversation, opened the subject with him.

"Well, 'M,'" I asked, "what places in Afghanistan have you seen?"

He said he had practically seen the whole of the country. "A man who has a lorry in Afghanistan has been to all the places in the country," he said. "I have been to Fatur, Ghazni, Khanabad, Mozar Sharif, Ankhori, Jalalabad." He reeled off another half a dozen names. "Have you been to Badakshan?" I asked.

## THE HANGO

"Of course," he replied. "I have even seen the Hango river on the other side of which is the Russian territory."

"Doesn't the Hango flow in the direction of Ankhoi," I inquired.

"Yes, it is the same river which flows in the direction of Ankhoi," he replied.

"Surely, those who live in the vicinity of the river must be often escaping into and out of the Russian territory," I remarked.

"Yes," he said, "many persons escape into Russian territory and bring back gold. You know the Afghan Government has banned the export of Karakalpaks. But a trade in smuggled lambskins is always going on."

"Standing on the Afghan side of the river I have several times seen the Russian territory," 'M' continued. "There is a friend of mine who carries on trade in smuggled goods. He has been to Russia so many times."

"That means," I suggested, "if any one wants to escape to Russia arrangements can always be made to get him smuggled across."

"That is easily done," said 'M' "If you want to go, I take the responsibility to taking you there."

"No." I corrected him promptly. "What business can I have there? I was just being curious. But tell me, what are the routes for reaching the Russian border?"

"One takes you through Khanabad to Pîr Sahib's shrine

which is very near the Hangō river," he said "The other route lies via Bukho, which is only 10 or 12 miles from the border."

"Is there any bridge across the river?" I asked "Are any boats available? How do people cross to the other side of the river?"

"There is a bridge," he said, "but it is difficult to use that without a passport. Usually the smugglers improvise boats by taking a number of *mashaks* (large leather bags), pumping air into them and stringing them together. A fisherman's net is spread over them to make a totally comfortable surface."

"Is there much risk of being caught?" I asked "People have been smuggling goods and themselves across the border regularly but no one has been detected or apprehended to my knowledge so far," he said.

"Do you know why I am so curious?" I said at last "There is a friend of mine soon arriving here secretly without a passport. Could you arrange for him to be conducted across the border? As a friend I have taken you into my confidence. I seek your advice because I don't know much about these things."

### TOUGH GUY

"Don't you worry about it," 'M' assured me "Send word to your friend to come along. Who can be more reliable for job than me?"

"I know you are a tough guy," I said "But this job is not as easy as you imagine. Everything has to be done in utmost

secrecy. "No one should get an inkling of it. There is always great risk in such undertakings. We must take care to see that my friend doesn't get into trouble before he sets foot on Russian soil. If there is a mishap my friend will be ruined. If you are arrested along with him, you may have to pass the rest of your life in prison. I am afraid, you haven't thought over all these aspects of the venture yet."

"Don't you worry about anything," he repeated. "Let us trust in God. This is not a very difficult job. God willing, no harm will come to him."

"All right," I said, "then I will send word to my friend to come here. But tell me, how will you take him across?"

"Does your friend know Persian or Pushto?" he asked.

"I think he doesn't know any language of this country," I replied. But he will be able to do one thing. He can bring along with him a person who can speak either Persian or Pushto."

"That will do," he said. "The fellow who knows Persian or Pushto, I will make into a Haji and we will disguise ourselves as Uzbeks and go to Nazar Sharif as pilgrims. We shall stay for a night in Nazar Sharif, and leave for Bukho the next day. There is a friend of mine living a short distance from Bukho who trades with the Russians. We'll go to him. He will do the rest."

"That is a good plan," I said. "I myself was thinking on these lines. But the Uzbek dress will not suit him. The Pathan

dress will be better, because the person who will accompany my friend knows only Pushto. If he knew the Uzbek tongue, the Uzbek dress would have been all right. Now what do you think will be the expenses of such a journey?"

"It will not be much," he said. "Nothing more than lorry fare and expenses on the way. Even in Ankhoi we propose to stay with a friend. Only we have to buy a present for him. We shall buy a pair of *chappals* and a *lungi*. This will be all the expenses—I mean, excluding what you are going to pay me. But please do bear in mind that these days I am high and dry. I hope you make it worthwhile for me."

### THE DEAL

"All right tell me how much you want," I asked.

"Whatever you consider reasonable. I personally think the amount should not be less than 600 or 700 Afghan rupees."

"Very well," I said, "I will pay you 700 Afghanis, but on one condition. I will give you 300 Afghanis to begin with, and the rest of the amount only after you have shown me a receipt from my friend saying that he has safely crossed the Afghan border."

"I do not mind even if you give me 200 Afghanis to begin with," replied 'M,' "and the remaining 500 after I have produced the receipt."

His attitude reassured me a lot.

"Have it anyway you like," I said. "But from tomorrow

you must look me up daily. I may have to consult you about so many things

'M' bade goodbye and went away.

In the evening I related to Bose the talk I had with 'M'. He asked me every possible detail about 'M,' his occupation, his habits and views. I told him all I knew. Then Bose said "A man of this type can certainly help in smuggling us into Russia. He is not the type who will let us down." Rahmat Khan had brought the maps of Afghanistan from the bazaar. On studying these we found that 'M' had outlined for us the correct routes for reaching the Russian border. Bose now decided to get away from Kabul in the next two or three days

Rahmat Khan decided to meet 'M' and see for himself what sort of man he was. I too was naturally keen to take every possible precaution. If anything happened to Bose, I thought, I would be put to shame for the rest of my life. So I promised to bring Rahmat Khan and 'M' together

## 9

I asked Rahmat Khan to reach my shop at 11 o'clock next morning to meet 'M', whom I expected at about 10 I told 'M.' that one of the two friends 'who had' to be smuggled across the Russian border had already arrived in Kabul "I have told him about you," I said, "and he has expressed a desire to see you 'I am expecting him here any moment. When he comes, you two can meet and chalk out the plan for your journey And don't you worry about money. I will try to find as much money as is needed "

Just as we were talking, a car stopped opposite my shop It was Signora Karoni She got out of the car and walked straight in I was surprised for this time it was not the familiar large yellow car she had used on previous occasions This was a much smaller car and she was driving it herself.

Signora Karoni inquired about Bose I told her he was absolutely tired of waiting and had begun to doubt whether the arrangements for his escape would ever be completed "No, no It is not true," she protested "We are trying our very best We have sent several cables to Rome for the couriers but have not yet

received any reply. We don't know what is causing all this delay. The *charge d'affaires* is also very much annoyed. You tell Bose not to worry. In a few days the arrangements will be complete."

I gave her Bose Babu's note for her husband which she took and went away.

At 11-15 Rahmat Khan turned up and I introduced him to 'M.' It was not safe to talk about such things in the shop, so they went to look for a more suitable place

In the evening when I returned home, Rahmat Khan told me that 'M' had taken him to his house and there they had fixed up the plan for the journey

"I have also told 'M,' Rahmat Khan added, "that the other friend who is going along with us would be here within three days and the day following his arrival we shall start on our journey."

Next morning, 'M' arrived at my shop quite early and posted me with the plan which Rahmat Khan and he had prepared together. I gave him some money and asked him to buy a pair of *chappals* and a *lungi* for his friend in Ankhoi.

#### A NEW PROBLEM

The same evening I had to face another problem. A friend of mine from Peshawar came to see me at the shop. He had arrived from Peshawar that very day. His name was Jiwanlal. He was an importer of dried fruits and always used to come to Kabul during this season for wholesale purchases.

In the course of conversation I asked Jiwandal what the people in India thought of Bose's disappearance. Jiwandal was illiterate and took little interest in politics. But Bose's disappearance was a subject in which everyone in India was interested. "My own idea is," he said, "that the British have locked him up in prison. They are propagating the lie that he has disappeared so that people might take him for lost, and the British might be able to do as they please with him."

It was now time to close the shop but I kept on sitting, hoping Jiwandal would go away. At last when Jiwandal showed no sign of leaving, I closed the shop and started towards my home. Jiwandal accompanied me hoping that I would invite him to dinner as I used to do on previous occasions. But I was not in a position to invite him now. So in the course of the conversation, I threw a hint. "There is no proper arrangement for my food these days," I told him. "My wife is ill, and I have to get food from the bazaar." Jiwandal took the hint, and when we reached home and I invited him to come in, he excused himself saying that he would not inflict himself on me as my wife was ill.

Next day Rahmat Khan, had arranged to see 'M,' to discuss further details about the journey. No sooner had I opened the shop than 'M' arrived and inquired about Rahmat Khan. I asked him to wait for Rahmat Khan. Meanwhile Jiwandal also arrived. He had met 'M' before and the two went on talking for about an hour when Rahmat Khan arrived. As soon as Rahmat Khan saw Jiwandal, he behaved like a stranger towards me,

greeted me with *assalam alaikum* and went away with 'M'

Jiwanlal knew very well that 'M' was a professional gambler. He was curious about Rahmat Khan. He asked me who he was. I said I had never met him before. He must be a friend of 'M.' "Beware of 'M,'" he said, "he is a professional gambler, and the other fellow too looks like a gambler. They may cheat you of your money some day." "Don't you worry about me," I replied.

At noon, Jiwanlal went away for lunch and soon after Rahmat Khan and 'M' returned. "We went and bought a pair of *chappals* and a *lungi*," Rahmat Khan told me, "and then we went to the lorry-stand near the *sewai* to inquire when the lorries leave for Nazar sharif. We were told that one had already left today and another would be leaving in about three days."

#### JIWANLAL CREATES A SCENE

Just as I was passing on a hundred-rupee note to 'M' Jiwanlal came in and was shocked to see me giving him money. In their very presence he started rebuking me. "Didn't I warn you not to fall into the clutches of these gamblers?" he shouted. "Obviously it has had no effect on you. Anyway, you do as you please. You know what is best for you. My duty, as a friend was only to warn you."

Both 'M' and Rahmat Khan felt very offended at Jiwanlal's remarks and left the shop in a huff. But Jiwanlal went on scolding me. He took it for granted that Rahmat Khan was

a cheat. I felt embarrassed. Should I tell him who Rahmat Khan really was, I asked myself, or shouldn't I? I saw some danger in not telling him the truth. Rahmat Khan was staying with me. The house where Jiwlanlal stayed was on way to my shop. It was quite possible that Jiwlanlal might come across Rahmat Khan in that locality, and his presence there might intrigue him all the more.

If I kept him ignorant of the real fact, I thought, Jiwlanlal might go about discussing my association with the two gamblers with other Indians in Kabul and point out Rahmat Khan to them. Since Mr 'R' also had seen Rahmat Khan the whole secret might be out and then Jiwlanlal's constant presence in my shop would make it impossible for me to do any work.

After thinking of all these risks, I said to Jiwlanlal "It was improper to call them gamblers to their face without knowing anything about them. I admit 'M' is a gambler, but what do you know of the newcomer? Was the mere fact of your seeing me giving him a hundred rupee note enough for you to jump to the conclusion that he was a cheat?"

"I know the first time I saw 'M' that he was a gambler," Jiwlanlal replied. His friend also has the same expression. What I said was for your good. But if you feel annoyed, I will not meddle in your affairs in future. You can do what you like."

"You may or may not meddle in my affairs," I said, "but why should you have insulted that good man?"

"But didn't you tell me you did not know who the new-

comer was?" Jiwandal retorted "And now you say he is a good man. Who is he after all? And why did you give him a hundred rupees?"

"I said I didn't know him because I didn't want you to know anything about him," I replied. "I had a definite purpose in giving him the money. I know you are not interested in that purpose. That is why I do not propose to tell you why I give him the money."

#### SUPER-SECRET

He kept silent for a while, and then said "So far you have never kept any secret from me. This must be a super-secret, since you refuse to reveal it even to me" "Yes," I said, "it is a super-secret. Moreover telling it to you may bring me great harm. Your knowing it will not do you any good. And lastly, the thing does not concern you at all."

All this made Jiwandal more suspicious. He begged me to tell him swearing that he would never let me down. I said "All right, let me think it over. I shall tell you about it tomorrow."

In the evening when I returned, I told Bose Babu about the matter. He asked further details about Jiwandal and then said "He is foolish and weak-hearted. Such a man should never be taken into confidence."

When I told him the risk involved in keeping the secret from him, Bose Babu said "Do as you like, but I would advise you against it. I will be here for another two days at the most."

You can tell him if you like after I am gone" I readily agreed I asked Rahmat Khan not to come to my shop to meet 'M' but to fix up some other rendezvous

Next day Jiwandal came to the shop and again asked about the secret I said "I am sorry I couldn't get time to think over the matter on account of my wife's illness" This silenced him but one could see he was angry In the evening when I came home, I found Rahmat Khan had completed all arrangements for leaving Kabul the third day It only remained to get the lorry seats reserved

I had just reached my shop next morning, when Jiwandal dropped in and again began pestering me regarding the secret "Please don't worry me," I said to him "Take it from me that I will not keep back the secret from you"

#### ITALIAN NOTE

As we were talking, Signora Karoni came She slipped an envelope into my hands Jiwandal noticed it. She was looking very happy I asked her what made her look so bright "When you read this note, you will know," she said "Are all the arrangements complete?" I asked "Yes," she said, and went away

Signora Karoni's visit wetted Jiwandal's curiosity all the more He was more eager than ever to know all about it. He submitted me to a detailed cross-examination about Signora Karoni and at last asked "What was that white piece of paper she handed over to you?"

"What piece of paper?" I exclaimed. "She gave me nothing of that sort. Are you awake or are you dreaming?"

"I am neither dreaming nor drunk, he said, "but since I came here, I find you completely changed I can't understand anything you do You have become so mysterious."

"I am the same as before," I retorted. "Only you seem to be suffering from some delusion."

Jiwanlal was terribly annoyed, and went away after a few minutes. Thank God, I said to myself I was so impatient to read the note from the Italian *Charge d'Affaires* It said "It is now several days since I sent you any message. That was because I had nothing to say But today a satisfactory reply has come from Rome The couriers have left Rome and will be here within a week As we need your photograph for the passport, please come to Darab Man road day after tomorrow at 11 a m You will find a car waiting for you whose number will be There will be a man in the car. Without saying anything to him, you get into the car It will take you to a safe place where you will be photographed. After your photo has been taken, the car will leave you at the place from where it picked you up You won't have to pay any charges for the photograph."

I was reading this note, when 'M' came in and inquired whether the friend who was to join him and Rahmat Khan in the journey to the Russian border had arrived I told him he had not yet arrived, but was expected by that evening. He had sent word that he had been delayed because he had been taken ill.

"But if he hasn't come so far, it will be difficult for us to go tomorrow," 'M' said

"Why?" I asked "If we want to leave tomorrow we have to get the seats in the lorry booked today, he said "These days there are very few lorries and too many passengers "

"Doesn't matter," I said. Now that he himself is ill I don't think he will be able to undertake another long journey immediately on his arrival. Only after he has reached Kabul can we finalize our plans'

# 10

Late in the evening when I reached home, I handed over the Italian *Charge d'Affaires'* letter to Bose Babu

After reading the letter, Bose asked me what I thought of it

"You know best what to do, whether to wait for the Italians or go with 'M' In any case even if you decide to go with 'M' you have to wait for three days," I said.

"Why?" asked Bose

"If the seats in the lorry had been reserved today, you could have left tomorrow," I replied But after this message, we did not get the seats booked "

"Of course, you did the right thing," said Bose "But if we are going to be here for another three days, I see no harm in giving my photograph to the Italians We have ample time to think over both the alternatives. If we decide to wait for the Axis couriers, we will probably have to wait for another 10 to 12 days. According to the cable, the couriers will arrive here in a week's time and it must take them at least three or four days before they can leave this place "

"Let us leave the matter here," interrupted Rahmat Khan.

"We have three days to think over the alternatives "

"Yes, we shall think it over tomorrow," I agreed with Rahmat Khan. "The immediate problem," I said, "is Jiwlanlal. Today he saw Signora Karoni delivering me the letter, and plagued me with questions for a long time and finally when I did not tell him anything he left in anger. That man is a prize fool. He may bring us to harm."

"I don't like the idea of taking him into confidence," said Bose. "But since we have to stay here for some time more, you do as you think best. If you find yourself in a situation in which you cannot but tell him everything then tell him."

#### JIWANLAL GETS THE SECRET

Next day when Jiwlanlal came to my shop I asked him where he had been all the day.

"What is the use of my coming here," he said, "when you don't tell me anything? I have now come to ask you one question."

"Is it something new?" I asked.

"No, it is the same old question," he said. "It is about that fellow who came with 'M' that day. Today I saw him in Hindu Guzar. Did he go to your house?"

"I had hoped you wouldn't ask me a second time about him, but I was mistaken," I replied. "It would have been far better if you had let the secret remain with me, but I find you getting more and more suspicious every day. Let me warn you that it is

a political affair. You may have to go to jail for it. Since you have no interest in politics, you better not ask about it. It may bring both of us to harm. The truth is that I am afraid to tell it to you. Who knows some day you may unwittingly blurt it out."

Jiwanlal assured me that he would never divulge the secret to any one, whatever he may have to suffer for it. He said he wouldn't even mind going to jail for it.

At last I told him that Bose Babu was staying with me and the man whom he had seen in Hindu Guzar was his companion.

Jiwanlal was stunned at hearing Bose's name and would not believe his ears.

"How can it be possible?" he exclaimed. He insisted that I should briefly tell him the whole story, which I did, all the time trying to tell him as little as possible.

After he had heard the story, he said "Now please let me have his *darshan*."

"I knew," I said, "that you would want to see him. That is why I did not want to take you into confidence. How can you compel a big man like him to see anybody? It would be better if you kept quiet. If he came to know that I told you about him, he would not forgive me."

## THE TWO ALTERNATIVES

Till late that night we went on discussing whether it was better to get out of Afghanistan with the help of the Axis or to cross into Russia with 'M's help. Previously whenever the question came

up for discussion, Bose used to say 'I am not prepared to go anywhere except to Moscow' But that night I felt he had slightly changed his mind Without coming to any decision we postponed the deliberations till the following night

Next morning Bose went out with Rahmat Khan to be photographed. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon, when they returned to the shop, I told Bose Babu that he had been invited to tea by the Haji We had to reach the Haji's place by 4-30 p m There were still two hours or so during which they could roam about in the bazaar and reach the appointed place in time I said if I could manage it I would come too.

At the appointed hour, both of them reached the Haji's house. When I went there later, Bose Babu was conversing in German with the Haji's wife After tea we returned home together.

## II

That night again, we discussed the 'same problem'. Both Rahmat Khan and I advised Bose to go with 'M'.

"There is no doubt," Rahmat Khan said, "that this journey to the border is full of hazards. It is quite possible, too, that you may have to stay in a Russian prison for a long period. But you have at least a chance of reaching Moscow. There is the hope that as soon as Moscow comes to know of your presence in Russia they will call you to Moscow. But I cannot imagine how the Axis powers can let you go from their hands during this critical period, once they get hold of you."

### BOSE'S DECISION

"If this latest message from the Axis had not come, I would certainly have gone with 'M,'" replied Bose. "But now that they have started finalizing their arrangements for my journey, it is not proper to let them down. Moreover the journey with 'M' is bound to be very risky. I may get arrested even before I reach the Russian border. The Axis, on the other hand, will arrange for an absolutely safe journey. Even if I have to stay

here for another ten days, isn't it worth while?"

"You two are convinced that the Axis would not let me go to Moscow," continued Bose. "I want you to drive any such ideas out of your heads. My absolute preference is for Moscow. Only it will be easier to go to Moscow from Berlin or Rome than here. And then there is another vital consideration. The Russian Ambassador here has refused to help me and the Russian Government has refused me passage through their country. It is quite possible they may not be wanting me, and may not countenance my stay in their country. At the Russian Legation in Berlin or Rome, I will find out if they can arrange to send me to Moscow. If they refuse, I will be forced to stay on in the Axis countries."

Rahmat Khan was also of the same opinion. "That is true," he said. "If the Russians regard you as a *persona non-grata*, how can you go to Russia?"

The matter was settled in favour of the Axis. I said now that they had made their choice between two alternatives, we had to explain to 'M' the reasons for cancelling the previous plan. In no case should he get suspicious. Rahmat Khan should not see him any more, and next morning when he came along, I would tell him that the friend who was to have come had been taken seriously ill and therefore Rahmat Khan had gone back. When both of them come back again, we would plan fresh arrangements.

Bose Babu approved.

At about 11 a. m. next day Signora Karoni came to my

shop. Jiwandalal also happened to be there. She gave me a letter and told me that the photograph had come out all right

### PASSPORT READY

So far I had told Jiwandalal nothing about Signora Karoni. Now I had to tell him all about her too. The latest letter from the Italian *Charge d'Affaires* said that Bose Babu's passport was ready, and they were only waiting for the couriers. Hope was expressed that they would reach in three or four days and Bose Babu was asked to be prepared for the journey.

Meanwhile Jiwandalal kept pestering me with requests to be allowed to meet Bose. I told him that Bose did not like to meet any stranger these days and it was with the greatest difficulty that I had been able to persuade him to see him. Jiwandalal was happy at the news, bought some fruit to offer to Bose Babu and came along with me to meet him. He impressed Bose as a clumsy and foolish person.

Jiwandalal now stuck to us most of the time. He would insist on knowing everything, but if there was a job to be done, he would try his best to avoid it. He was afraid even to be seen with Bose Babu and Rahmat Khan in the bazaar. But whenever Signora Karoni came to the shop, he would talk tall trying to impress upon her that he was one of the gang. (After I was arrested and exonerated by the Afghan Government, people in Kabul frightened Jiwandalal out of his wits. They told him that since he was my friend, it was possible, the Afghan Government

might extort him too, and advised him to run away from Kabul Eight days after my arrival in India, he also returned and the police arrested him and flung him into prison )

We had to get two suits made for Bose Babu I got a few suit lengths from the bazaar out of which Bose selected two The Haji had told me that he was on very good terms with a tailor who did all his clothes He asked me to send Bose Babu to his house where he would call the tailor, and have his measurements taken He was sure the clothes would be ready before the date of Bose Babu's departure Bose too approved of the suggestion

Next day Bose came out of the house with me, strolled in the bazaar till one o'clock and then went to the Haji's house where the tailor was called, and his measurements taken He gave the suits in time, but one waistcoat was not ready So the Haji's wife promised to get it when it was ready and send it by parcel post through her sister in Germany; which she afterwards did During the next two days we bought most of the things Bose Babu needed for the journey

#### FINAL MESSAGE

The very next day after Rahmat Khan delivered Bose Babu's letter at the Italian Legation, the *Charge d'Affaires* and his wife turned up at my shop Signora Karoni gave me an envelope and said it was the final message for Bose

Bose Babu was asked to put all his things in a suit case

and send them to the shop. A man, the message said, will come along at 2 p.m. on March 16 and collect it. Bose was informed that he was to leave on March 18 and so, "both of you should reach the house of Signor Karoni (of the Italian Legation) in the New City, by 8 p.m. on March 17. You will have your dinner there and will be acquainted with further details about the journey."

Bose was at the Haji's house when this message came and I took it there, I said. "Give me something to eat, as a present before I give you this message." He said "I am sorry I have nothing to give you to eat except cakes," and gave me a piece of cake. "Now what is the message?" he asked.

"The hard and nerve-racking days which you have spent here are over." So saying I handed him the letter.

After reading the message, Bose said "I am so happy at hearing all this" He made extremely generous and appreciative remarks about what I had done for him I touched his feet and asked him to forgive us for any inconvenience caused to him or any disrespect of which any of us might have been unconsciously guilty

Bose laughed and said "Yes I am very angry with your little daughter Whenever I took my food she would throw slice after slice of bread in my plate When I intended to eat two slices she would make me eat five"

It was late in the evening when we returned from the Haji's house. While leaving, the Haji requested Bose Babu to lunch

with him on the 17th and stay for the afternoon tea. Bose accepted the invitation

Next day (March 16), we put Bose Babu's things in a suitcase and I brought it with me when I came to the shop. Since the latest message had given us the number of Signor Karoni's house, it was not difficult to locate it.

Twice that week 'M' came round to inquire if the friend whom we were expecting had arrived. At first I told him that he had not yet arrived. But when he came to inquire again, I told him that my friend was too ill to come and even Rahmat Khan was wanting to return to India and that the plans for the journey to the Russian border had to be cancelled.

"As I have given you Rs 400," I told him, "out of which you have purchased a pair of *chappals* and a *lungi*, you better return me the rest of the money." I know it was impossible to get any money back. I was counting on the truth of the proverb that "the best way to lose a friend is to lend him money" I wanted to get rid of him.

Exactly at 3 P.M. Signora Karoni came and inquired about the suitcase. I had it put in her car and she went away.

That night was Bose Babu's last night under my roof.

## 12

Next morning Bose Babu had his breakfast, kissed the children goodbye, and came out of the house at 11 A.M. The rest of the day he spent at the Haji's house.

On the way from the Haji's house to Signor Karoni's house, Bose exchanged his hat for my Karakalı cap so that he may not attract attention. At Signor Karoni's house I bade him good-bye and returned. "Be very careful," was his last advice to me. "I shall let you know as soon as I reach Berlin," he assured me.

Next morning on March 18 at about 10 a.m. Rahmat Khan came to my shop and said Bose had already left at 9. Two Germans and one Italian accompanied him. In the passport which the Italians had given him his name was put down as Karatine.

One of the Germans who went along with Bose Babu, was Dr Weller. From the Haji I learnt that he was a very shrewd fellow. Perhaps the reason for his assignment was that the Germans wanted Bose themselves and did not want the Italians to appropriate him.



stayed there for a night, and next day took the plane to Berlin. He did not go to Rome, but it was hoped that from Berlin he would go there."

### SECRET SERVICE INQUIRY

A few days after Bose left Kabul. I met a person in the bazar known as an agent of the British Secret Service. He said to me "I have an urgent business with you I was just going to your shop. It is good that I met you here"

I was taken aback and wondered what possible business this man could have with me. He was a palace courtier and was known as Bashi Saheb.

"What's the matter, Bashi Sahib?" I asked. "What can I do for you?"

"It is an urgent matter and not so urgent either," Bashi Sahib replied enigmatically. But I know this much that no one else but you can do it."

This intrigued me all the more.

"I have asked two other Indians to do it, but they expressed their helplessness in the matter," he continued. "It is they who have suggested to me your name"

I asked him who those Indians were and what was his business.

"Don't bother about the names," he said. "The business is this You know Khan Allah Nawaz Khan, the Afghan Minister in Germany He is a friend of mine. You also know

that he talks to His Majesty on the telephone from Berlin every Monday."

"I know this," I replied, "that Khan Allah Nawaz is the Afghan Minister in Berlin. But how do you expect me to know anything about the telephone talks? It is the first time I hear of it"

"You may not be knowing it," he said, "but everybody else in Kabul knows it. However, last Monday Allah Nawaz also talked to me on the telephone. He said 'Two Hindus have escaped from India and are hiding in Kabul. At the moment they are staying with a Hindu in a Hindu Guzar. I have been informed here that the German Legation in Kabul is doing its best to bring them to Berlin. You find out where they are staying and let me know next Monday."

"I am sure," I said, "the Minister told you the name of the fugitive Hindus."

"Yes, I have got them down in my pocket book but I have left it at home," he replied. "I think the name of one of them is Chandra Bose."

"Is it Subhas Chandra Bose?" I asked

#### INCREDIBLE

"Yes, yes, that is the name," he said

"He, of course, is one of the topmost leaders of India," I said. "He belongs to Bengal and disappeared mysteriously from his home, about two months ago. But I am sure there is

some mistake somewhere. How is it possible that a Bengali, and that too such a big leader, should escape from India and come to stay in Kabul without knowing the language of this country? The person who spoke to you on the telephone must be drunk."

"I don't know all that," Bashi replied. "I have told you what the Minister told me on the telephone. I shall be grateful if you try your best to get the information."

"But Bashi Sahib," I pleaded, "my commonsense refuses to give credence to the story. And you have not told me the name of the person with whom the two fugitives are alleged to be putting up. Is he a native of Afghanistan or an alien? If Allah Nawaz Khan could know so much from that distance, surely he must have told you what that Hindu's name is."

"He did not tell me the name," Bashi replied, "but it cannot be difficult to find it out, particularly if he happens to be living in Hindu Guzar."

"You know very well," I said, "that I am not a native of this country. I come to my shop in the morning and return home in the evening. Apart from my business I have few interests in Kabul. How can I find out in whose house these people are hiding? Besides, this work is of a political nature. I always keep away from politics. You better entrust this work to a Kabuli who may be able to get you some clue. But I beg you to do one thing for me. If you are able to trace Subhas Chandra Bose, please do inform me. I want to have his *darshan*."

Bashi again said that if I could not do this no one else in Kabul could. At least he could not think of any one who could do it. "You are bothered about his *darshan*, while I am at a loss how to find him out," he added.

I had guessed Bashi Sahib's real purpose during the conversation. He must have cooked up the story of Allah Nawaz Khan making an inquiry on the telephone. After all he was not the only detective in Afghanistan that the Minister should have telephoned to him about it. And Berlin's Foreign Office was not so inefficient as to let out the secret of Subhas Babu's presence in Kabul. It must be someone else who must have entrusted him with this task.

So I told Bashi Sahib of my inability to undertake the assignment and came away to my shop. I was happy that the Government of India had got a clue about Bose's presence in Kabul only when it was too late.

Next day I again came across Bashi Sahib in the bazaar. He told me the name of the other man who was supposed to be accompanying Subhas Babu. I was sure the India Government could not have found the other name. But on hearing the right name, the colour of my face changed. I immediately regained control and said, "All right, I will try to find out, and if I can trace them I will let you know. Meanwhile I would like you to do one thing. If you happen to speak to Allah Nawaz Khan again over the telephone, please find out from him if he knows the name of the Hindu with whom they are supposed to be

staying There I left him

## DOUBTS

Doubts now began to assail whether it was the German Foreign Office which had let out the secret. But again I thought that if the leakage had taken place at that end, it would not have been difficult either to know the name of the person with whom Bose was supposed to be staying in Kabul. It may be Rahmat Khan's name was guessed by the Indian C I D. It was certain that after Bose Babu's escape, the Indian police must have searched the houses of those suspected of harbouring Bose Babu. The police must have searched for Rahmat Khan and finding him missing must have suspected that he too had escaped with Bose.

A few days later Signora Karoni came to my shop. With her was a German whom she introduced to me as a responsible member of the German Legation who had recently arrived in Kabul. I complained to him that Foreign Office in Berlin had let out our secret and related to him what Allah Nawaz Khan had told Bashi Sahib on the telephone. He laughed and said "Our Foreign Office cannot let anything leak out. And of all men, for the Afghan Ambassador to know of it! It is incredible."

Signora Karoni said the Peshawar C I D must have looked for Rahmat Khan and not being able to find him must have connected him with Bose's escape.

"That is what I also think," I said, "but look at these fools

Of all men they come and ask me about him." They laughed and went away.

### LETTER FROM BOSE

Three months after Bose Babu's departure from Kabul, the Haji's wife received a letter in German from Bose Babu. It was mainly about her sister in Berlin and acknowledged receipt of the waistcoat. There were two lines for me which were translated to me by the Haji's wife. They read as follows: 'Uttam Chand Namaste. I am very grateful to you for what you have done. I shall never forget it all my life. Ziauddin.'

THE END





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